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The London Charivari

LIKE everyone else I have been casting about for explanations of N. Khrushchev's astonishing performance in Paris last week. In *Paris*. Did Stalin ever go to Paris? Did he ever leave Mother Russia? And how far abroad did those other dictators, Hit and Muss, dare to travel? Dictatorial tyrants cannot afford to turn their backs on their henchmen. So the thought arises—is Mr. K. anything more than a convenient father-figure mouthpiece for the comrades in the small back rooms of the Kremlin? I doubt it. Nowadays one can almost gauge the nature of a country's political system by the frequency with which its titular leaders voyage afar. Democracy encourages globe-trotting premiers and presidents; oligarchies push out their front men on face-saving and face-lifting missions; dictators still have to stay at home, with one hand on the trigger under the pillow.

What About a Rally?

SPYING is obviously the spring topic and I suppose we must learn to live with it for a week or two. All the

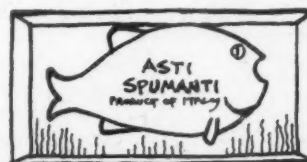


same, it was pretty startling to read an official statement from one of Dr. Adenauer's men announcing the red

spy population of West Germany as 16,000. It seems a lot. Even when you consider that only 8,000 of them are doing the work and the other 8,000 watching them.

Arms for Export

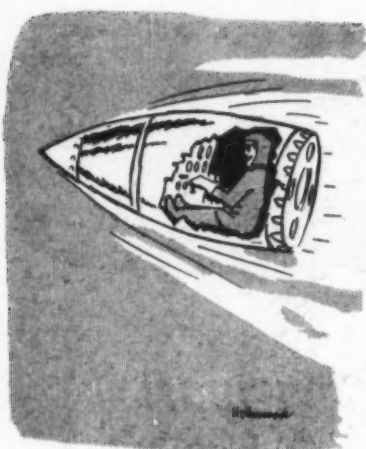
"KENTUCKY flintlocks" manufactured in Italy are selling briskly in the United States as souvenirs of the American civil war. Italian gunsmiths can make them more cheaply than anyone else. Experience has a



long lead there; bravoes were stalking the streets of Milan and Florence long before Capone and Co. The story makes one doubt the authenticity of all those blunderbusses in our olde pubbes; can they come as promotion gimmicks from the vermouth vendors?

Spacemanship

I CAN'T go along with this idea that Mr. Khrushchev wrecked the Summit talks because he thought he would get on better with President Eisenhower's successor than with himself. To start with, he is hardly likely to get a better deal from a Roman Catholic politician than a Protestant ex-soldier; but the real key is in his petulant exclamation that the conference might have to be postponed for "six or eight



"Soviet space-ship dummy calling all dummies in Oxford Street, Bond Street, Fifth Avenue, Rue de la Paix, the Kurfürstendamm . . ."

months." Everyone must have noticed his habit of putting up a really sensational spaceship whenever he is about to make contact with the Americans. If you ask me, six or eight months is the time his experts have told him they will need before they can send up a space-ship with a man in it.

References Essential

COUNSEL'S clichés run in vogues. Last week a small-time trickster was described as "living the life of a Walter Mitty," which came in when "leading a Jekyll and Hyde existence" went out. "Nor Hell a Fury like a woman scorned" retains its popularity for use in *crimes passionels*, and Moriarty keeps ever young for talking about crooks with three or four accomplices, but violence, which occupies so much of the courts' time, rarely sends the barristers running for their tag-files. I have never heard them cadging sympathy for their clients by calling them a Dick Turpin *manqué* or a dream-world Jack the Ripper lacking a mother's care.

Nothing to Lose but Your Trains
STATION-announcers sometimes mumble and whisper, like competitors in a talent contest with stage-fright, sometimes recite obscure Sussex place-names in unintelligible Caribbean accents, sometimes bring a pleasant

touch of linguistic confusion to the railways by broadcasting braw Scots in Surrey, or Lancashire in Devon. A recent blast of criticism contained the curious statement that train-announcements at Crewe were often like quotations from Karl Marx. As nothing on earth is *like* a quotation from Marx it seems probable they were, in fact, genuine, the obvious next step in international propaganda. If you cannot get access to a nation's radio transmitters, go for its platform loud-speakers.

Britain Can Fake It

THE Hovercraft's noisy demonstration flight over the Thames at Westminster was impressive enough in its way, I suppose, though M.P.s had already witnessed the more wonderful spectacle of Mr. Marples himself hovering upside down supported only by hot air, or, as he called it, bluff, over the Pink Zone. But now I see that when it comes to illusory presentation of our transportation muddle Mr. Marples has something to learn from next month's great British Exhibition in New York. Americans will be informed by a sign on a revolving pillar that Britain has "more vehicles per road mile than any other nation." That ought to give those Americans something to think about, who merely have more vehicles per capita.



"Posh customers. Two yoghurts daily, and they bet by 'phone."

Peaks of Prose

SUMMIT metaphors became hopelessly mixed. Could the Summit be kept alive? It was on a razor's edge . . . then Khrushchev torpedoed it. But it had not yet become a plenary Summit, and perhaps it could be salvaged. Then the Summit foundered. It was in ruins. Mr. K. had wrecked it. The curtain, as someone then wrote, came down on it. And the B.B.C. was blunt on the morning after: "The Summit is dead." I suppose it would be simply ridiculous to hope that when it is eventually resurrected it will be called something quite different.

All This and Torquemada Too

AN advertisement for a nuclear disarmament meeting promises that a number of distinguished speakers will answer criticisms from "experienced interrogators." This seems a new line in political publicity and I should like to know more. Are the interrogators chosen from barristers or the Customs Service or psychologists or M.I.5 or "Panorama"? Are they supporters of the campaign who are willing to pose as opponents for the occasion or are they dyed-in-the-wool H-bomb supporters? And do the audience have to guess which questioners are experienced interrogators and which are merely hecklers?

Under the Eaves

IT is not often they catch eavesdroppers nowadays, but one was successfully prosecuted the other day at Burnham. This old-fashioned sport, which smacks of the days of coin-clipping and nose-slitting, must be pretty unrewarding in modern conditions, for at nine houses out of ten the only voice you are likely to hear is that of Richard Dimbleby. I wonder, though, whether neighbours who listen on party telephone lines could be pulled in for eavesdropping? Are they not the type whose object is "to hearken after discourse and thereupon to frame slanderous and mischievous tales"? Test case, please.

Loss of Innocence

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD friend of mine reported, after eating a new breakfast cereal bought at her request, "They said on the television it was gorgeous, but it isn't." — MR. PUNCH



THE PEACEMAKER

AMERICAN ATTITUDES

The writer is Assistant Managing Editor of "Time" and author of the recent best-seller "The Waist-High Culture"



9 CULTURE: LET ME OFF UPTOWN By THOMAS GRIFFITH

AMERICA is full of culture these days, and not very neutral about it. An ardent minority pursues it relentlessly, inquisitively and ever so tolerantly. But for most Americans culture is something a woman aspires to and a man must be dragged to: it is the art he doesn't like. Testifying recently before Congress, the poet Robert Frost ruefully observed that "A great many men say to me 'My wife is a great fan of yours.'" For a plain-spoken American culture is not even a word that comes readily to his tongue or sits agreeably on his ear. Ask that American instead what he thinks of American *civilization* or "the American way of life" and he would find the question easier to answer, would tell you about ease of manners, the willingness to live and let live, or the convenience of made things—the power of a car, the intricate beauty of a traffic clover-leaf, the advantages of things that work or gadgets that save effort. That isn't what you meant at all?

Then ask this American what he likes in entertainment, what shows he prefers and what books he reads, and you may come closer to what the sociologists mean by culture. At this point an Englishman might be startled to realize that he understands most of the American allusions and even recognizes the terrain—whether the American is expressing a preference for Gary Cooper or a distaste for Tennessee Williams's "cornpone melodrama"; whether he likes Perry, not Elvis; whether he favourably remembers the earlier John O'Hara but cannot forgive the latest. And this is the first truth about American culture: that although there is more of it where it came from, the Englishman who has never left home already has absorbed most of it through his eyes, ears and pores, has as much familiarity with it as he cares to, and sometimes more than he wants. He would probably be not much more saturated by it if he visited America, and the only travel wisdom he might gain would be the discovery that there are resistance movements in America too.

But what Englishmen may think most culturally American is something an American usually does not think about in

nationalistic terms at all. The impression one gets from reading British reviews of our cultural exports is that a critic fears that he may be out of step, and perhaps even disloyal to NATO, if he finds *Flower Drum Song* tired, banal and synthetic—which is how New Yorkers felt about it. An Englishman subjected to Hollywood, to Westerns, to thrillers, to Broadway musicals, to Faulkner's convoluted prose, to Count Basie's relentlessly excellent rhythm section, speaks of American music or American films. He may be heard to say that American writing is at once more sentimental and tougher than his; may think American biographies too long, American critics too pedantic, American playwrights too morbid. But an American, thinking of such a subject as jazz, rarely considers it as an American phenomenon; he thinks of individual performances and differing styles, whether it be Dixieland or collegiate-commercial. Transatlantic enthusiasms, like a convert's fervour, often embarrass. An English poet must wince when told by an enthusiastic American that "all you English writers read aloud so well," and that fine negro jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis, once remarked in wonderment, but perhaps with a trace of annoyance, "In Europe they like everything you do. The mistakes and everything."

Still, if an American finds his plays, songs and books good or bad one by one, is there a style and manner common to them all? Is there now a distinctly American culture? It is easy to think there is, and to provide illustrations. But try defining that American difference. A Mickey Spillane or a Raymond Chandler thriller differs from Sherlock Holmes or an Agatha Christie in pace, violence and crudity; and also differs from Ian Fleming's outflow, which is mock-American. Then think of the extremes in English and American theatre. Picture that familiar English play in which the curtain rises on the maid answering the telephone, confiding to us and to the dead wire the intricate social tangles—the past affairs, the present secrets—that will be exposed when the guests gather shortly for dinner. We sit back like children hearing a favourite bedtime story—perhaps once too often. We can

be comfortably sure that at a climactic moment of social indiscretion the maid will announce that dinner is served, and down will come the Act One curtain. Set against this one of those American plays in which a truck driver in a T-shirt scratches himself and lusts after the girl standing there in her slip—his slurred language alternately blunt and high-flown, so that we recognize that the slob has a feeling about the moon but just can't get it out very well. We perceive a difference in dimension, style and thought: the English play pallid and parochial, the American—except in its most successful moments—an uneasy merger of hardness and self-pity.

If some Englishmen find this mixture too rich and too raw, the American chronicle of show business, *Variety*, recently reported that Americans "in the sticks" were puzzled, annoyed or angry ("FOLKS DON'T DIG THAT FREUD") at current Broadway offerings, which this season have run heavily to junkies, drunks, cannibalism, incest, homosexuality, rape and insanity, most of it presented with the implication that anyone who views these manifestations without sympathy has hardened his heart or is square in the head. The philistine complains that such theatre doesn't do justice to us, or put America's best foot forward (as if that was the theatre's mission!); the rest of us, recognizing that a playwright has to find his material in what concerns him, suspects him too often of acting out his resentments without triumphing over them, and without fashioning art of it. There is one view of American life that the contented are sick and don't know it, while the wise ones know that they are sick and are glad of it. There must be a deeper wisdom than that, waiting

somewhere in the wings, ready to come on stage with a straw hat, a wide smile and the old soft shoe. If nowadays the serious American play is apt to be set in Kansas or Mississippi the atmosphere was born on a couch in Vienna.

To find something more incontestably American, take the ballets of Jerome Robbins. They are full of vulgarity and nuance, of swagger and shyness, as he catches the impudence of a sailor's walk, or the sudden loneliness of an over-rouged bar girl. Vitality is perhaps the first word the London critic reaches for to describe a Robbins ballet. But vitality is equally a Russian asset in the dance. Think of those leaping Cossack males who, after the pastel waltzing mistiness of the *corps de ballet*, come roaring on stage as if bearing a cold-war message. They are full of animal athleticism too. Then what is so specifically American about a Jerome Robbins ballet? Perhaps it is not just vitality but vitality allied with wit. The wit is the unexpected kind that breaks a spell, a self-deprecating wit, as if effort must not take itself too seriously, and it could well be the product of a kind of society that wants no one thinking himself better than anyone else, where a man must seem at every moment ready to laugh at himself, even if the laugh be assumed. It is a style and stance characteristic of America, though our present gloomy deans of literature, in their eagerness to find in the American past examples to match their mood, concentrate heavily on an American Pantheon of Melville, Hawthorne and Poe, and seem not to know quite what to do about Mark Twain, except to play down his comic side. Neither Mark Twain nor Abraham Lincoln played the comic just to conceal his sadness; wit that was self-deprecating was an essential



"... or if that's too mild, how about a drop of parsnip?"



part of them, and it was certainly not one of their weak points. But before one goes much farther in defining American culture he soon discovers that what is generally celebrated as 100 per cent American turns out to be, particularly in the popular arts, peculiarly the property of one or another minority. It is not just that some of the best American writers find their richest themes in their Jewishness (Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth) or that Saroyan owes his cockalorum feyness as much to being Armenian as to being American. Not just the inspiration of Puccini but also a simplicity and a sadness in his own Italian origins help to make Menotti the kind of Italo-American dramatist and musician he is, and it is a far cry from the corn-fed American optimism of *Everything's Comin' Up Roses*. What would jazz and the blues be without the negro? And, not to confine the point to ethnic separation, many of the nation's best writers find their inspiration in the affliction of being Southerners.

America's popular music is written by men who feel parted from civilization whenever they are five minutes away from Broadway. There they thump out their ersatz longing for Tennessee, Carolina, or ould Ireland far across the sea—places they have never been to and have no special curiosity to see. They celebrate how rich they are on nothin' but love. They exalt the lonely silence of boots 'n' saddles 'neath that Western sky, and then adjourn to Lindy's for coffee and strawberry cheesecake with the mob. (They would rather simply rhyme moon and June, but so debased and mechanically merchandised is pop music at the moment that these same cigar-smoking artisans must now feign pre-puberty youth, and write whimpering odes to a "teenage Madonna" or sigh over a love affair that was ill-fated from the start because you were already so old-d-d-d, at sixteen.) Tin Pan Alley consists largely of Jewish composers and lyricists turning out tunes to be sung primarily by negro or Italian entertainers. This ethnic division of labour, also familiar in America among Portuguese fishermen and Japanese truck gardeners, is no new thing. The older ballads Americans love best, nostalgic

about ol' Kaintucky or down on the Swanee, are about negroes—but written by the white Stephen Foster, and though negro actors and singers add a stage poignancy to *Porgy and Bess*, its author was white, and it was set to music by another white.

The art of public comedy in America, though it finds room for a few Irish, and at least one Lebanese and one Cuban in the bigtime, is also largely Jewish. Once it was bathos and humour and hokum entwined, sympathy-seeking, as in Eddie Cantor and George Jessel, and some of this mood survives in Danny Kaye. But the predominant night-club style is now mordant, cynical, knowing, fast. The negro spiritualist sang "Nobody knows the troubles I've seen"; the message of the modern comedian is "You think you got troubles!" At its best the style is cutting, half-sad, bittersweet, as if the honesty of a laugh is the only escape from what is irreducibly hard and unfeeling in the world. The comedian may be merciless, but he numbers himself among the targets and victims; he is without illusions rather than disillusioned; he lacks the savagery and hatred of the Brecht-Weill era of post-Versailles Germany; he enjoys his unhappiness and his humour in his revenge. The style is urban (it must be diluted for coast-to-coast television) and only in New York, or in its Catskill, Florida or Nevada outposts does it still preserve a quality essentially Jewish. One of the penalties of Hitler is that dialect and race, once so honest an enrichment of entertainment, have come to be avoided, or made self-conscious. A blander, more homogenized America may be preferable socially, but a flavour has been lost. (Something awesome and immense about the nuclear age has also modified the abandon with which American political humour once freely abused the rogues and ignoramus in public life: part of the dated charm of reading Mark Twain, Finley Peter Dunne and H. L. Mencken lies in its excess. Now political satire is more precise, and more despairing.)

To accent the minority contribution to American culture is not to dispute its Americanness. Minorities are what America is about: America is not just a colony of Englishmen who defected 185 years ago, but a more or less compatible collection of Poles and Puerto Ricans, Germans, Russians, negroes and Scandinavians, and their intermingled offspring, who are united by Coca-Cola, "I Love Lucy" and "Stardust."

* * * * *

Culture is a very pervasive thing these days, and its blast is everywhere felt. Self-improvement is the big thing in America. But what spreads these days is not exclusively American. A geiger counter decorated in stars and stripes would have a hard time isolating anything purely American, untainted by foreign influences. The all-night "good music" radio stations play Beethoven or Vivaldi, not Americans; the silk-screen reproductions on thousands of American walls are not of Edward Hopper or Mark Rothko but of Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, Matisse and Picasso. Contemporary arts tend to be universal, and whatever is isolated is apt to be stagnant. But if swept by foreign influences, American culture is not overrun by them. America takes and gives, absorbs and resists and modifies, and decides for itself. It is not derivative but eclectic.

Of all the arts in America, architecture to-day is in the happiest state. It owes much to the internationalists—to

Mies, Corbusier, Gropius, Nervi—but now itself robustly sets the pace for the rest of the world, with a clean, spacious and experimental style full of great technical brilliance. This is one of those infrequent moments when talent and opportunity coincide. True, the face of America is often a blotched conglomerate of roadside pizza joints and rows of one-story pseudo-Georgian ranch houses, but there are also rich commissions available to audacious architects. Business wants the borrowed prestige of a distinctive building, and it was a distiller who hired Mies to build his beautiful bronze geometric temple on Park Avenue. In these times the rich want luxurious simplicity and individual distinction in their homes. And even mass-producers of homes have had to upgrade their designs to suit a more educated taste that spreads from museums and through magazines to people who cannot afford what is individually crafted but are demanding about what they will take in factory-made.

In music much is heard, but playing 20th-century American instead of 19th-century European is considered a duty not a pleasure. America has provided a latter-day home for some distinguished exiles, among them Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith, Bartok and Bloch, without seriously influencing their output or rearing up any native challenger who matches their gifts. America's serious composers generally seem thorough craftsmen without the common gift of melody, though some write elegant variations on cowboy laments, and "The Streets of Laredo" echoes through as many American works as the "Volga Boatman" flows through Russian music. Serious composers no longer, as in the days of Gershwin, naively seek the missing link that will make jazz respectable and the symphonic palatable. Instead, they teach at the universities. Jazz has gone intellectual too, the excitement now largely confined to small studious units (some of them very good) that specialize in a kind of scholarly outrage of sound. A few gifted performers, such as Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, add style to banal and sentimental ballads, while in nostalgic corners men grown grey or bald enthusiastically insist that time stopped in New Orleans in 1917. In ballet the gusto is American but the significant influence is a transplanted Russian, George Balanchine, who, unlike his friends among exiled composers, seems to have been inspired by the American impact while imparting discipline to it.

In painting even jaded Paris has in recent years paid tribute to America's vigorous action painters—Jackson Pollock and the rest—who celebrate the impulsive and the subconscious, painting splotchy, mystical entrails. The ascendancy of this group is now passing, to the relief of most museum-goers, who puzzled over it and earnestly blamed themselves for not understanding it better. But action's celebrated names have hit a dead end, and the army of talented younger American painters is searching for new gods or even just a new idea.

But all this is to talk about the doers, not about those who absorb and define a culture, and the common ground is often an uneasy one. Culture, most of all in a democracy, has its public surface and its private depths. The public surface these days in America is gritty, sterile and hapless. "People don't want quality and you can't shove it down their throats," says Arthur Godfrey, who as a television personality has never forced quality down anyone's gullet. The glassy stare

of the television camera gives back inspiration to no one, and entertainers who aim to please have to take polls to find out what does. Accordingly, the public seems saturated and sated with sameness, and the American mass market of culture might be described as at once prosperous and restless.

But this same fatness provides a comfortable living at the barricades for those who are in revolt against it. Box-lunches are sent up into the hills for starving guerrillas. Foundations lavish money on them, provide them scholarships and send them abroad, if only they have the gift of satisfying committees. A large audience of clubwomen provide eager sympathy to those who will lecture them, and businessmen want to be admired for having interests wider than money-grabbing. In fact all this public willingness to accept anything novel in the arts, so long as it is not conventional, must make it harder for creators to set standards for themselves.

Much ferment without much focus is going on in a new generation of Americans. Artistic dedication is to be seen in considerable numbers of them, especially among those who came back from the war and those of the generation since. They are discontented with a commercial society, despising its standards, but they are also dissatisfied with mere dissent and complaint. They seek their own niche and are indifferent to politics and movements, and leave conspicuous protest to the beatniks. They tend to be intensive, introspective and inarticulate, and perhaps a little solemn. They live simply, for foundations provide a living but not a chance to live it up. Some have written first novels of promise and may yet write better ones. Some have had group showings of their paintings but have not yet resolved their styles. A great deal is astir in America that has not yet found its voice and is not yet sure what it wants to say, only what it does not want to. Somewhere among them must be the winners of the future, though it is too early to make a winter book on them as individuals. But all that stupefying thrust towards culture going on in America to-day, all that outpouring of energy and experiment, must be leading somewhere.

Further contributors: Ian Nairn, Keith Kyle



Go on, Ask Me

By NORMAN LOWE

THE moment the foreign fact-finding probe begins the journalist's notebook begins to fill up with maxims—maxims readily proffered by local politico and European settler alike. This sort of thing:

"They say," an elderly planter told me, "that this country has a tragic history. They're wrong. It has a tragic geography."

Or:

"If," remarked a local traffic manager's wife sardonically, "they banish a dissident and call it selective depopulation—well, we taught them English, didn't we?"

Or:

A native labour union official was frank about it. "Perhaps," he admitted, "what happened at Bombogo was a

blot on our record. But you don't use a pencil when you're writing for posterity."

Khrushchev's proverbs seem pretty poor stuff in comparison. So much aphoristic thinking has been done by these assorted interviewees that they're never at a loss. They never profess ignorance of, or indifference to, the problems of their country, native or adopted. They never assert, as so many people in Britain do, that as long as they can get on with their jobs in peace they don't give a damn who runs the show. Not a bit of it. They have as many theories as Marx, Thorstein Veblen and Poujade combined, and the chiselled phraseology in which they deliver them makes Hemingway seem almost flowery.

Some day a journalist from one of the then fully-developed countries might visit Britain on a similar assignment and ask me a few questions. If he does, this is the kind of thing I'd like to think his readers were absorbing the next day or so, in the compound or under the palm-trees:

"What Britain needs most," said a man I met at a party, "is a home in every garage."

Or, if he introduces politics:

"The trouble with your government," an Englishman sitting next to me remarked, "is this—it's been too busy detaching itself from the Mother Country to realize who its Stepmother Country is going to be."

Or:

"England," said a man I was talking to in a cafeteria one morning, "is the only country in the world where a man's accent can form the plot of a novel."

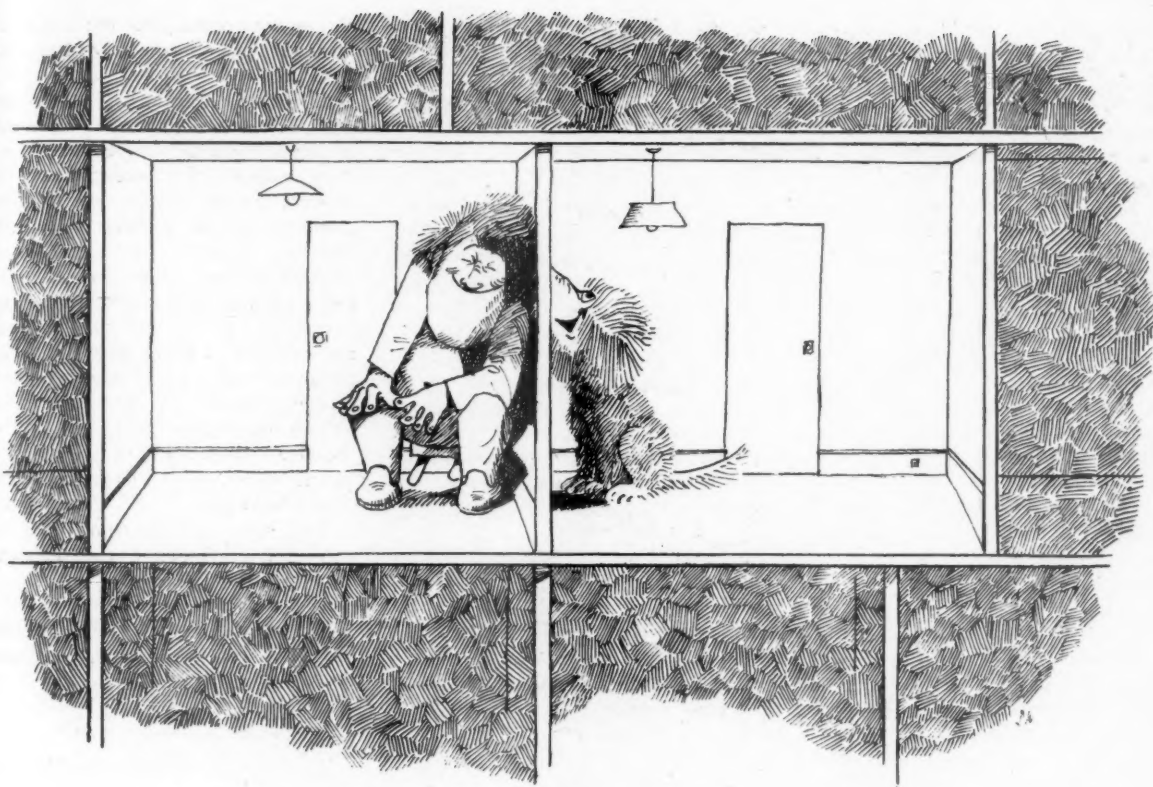
And if the conversation turns commercial:

"It's a funny thing about our export trade," said my host, "but although we're supposed to be flooding Europe with everything from push-bikes to pullovers, the one thing you never hear about when you go abroad is an English product. I take a Continental holiday every year and I speak three languages—but damned if anyone I've ever met has so much as mentioned his British refrigerator or his British pair of brogues."

Yes, I may be the most emphatic don't-know in the British pollster's experience, but to overseas interrogators—man, I'm loaded.



Russia's Krokodil was apparently as ill-informed about Mr. Khrushchev's intentions in Paris as the rest of us. Here Miss Spring prepares the conference-table against a peaceful background of Notre Dame and the Seine.



Men of the Pen

By H. F. ELLIS

AS soon as I heard that a Hand-writing Institute had been instituted I wrote to them as follows:

"DEAR SIRs,—May I be among the first to compliment you on meeting what all right-thinking persons will agree to be a crying need? As you rightly say, illegible handwriting is responsible for intolerable delays, difficulties and loss in the commercial field, and much irritation, to say the least, in social relationships. Your scheme to promote better handwriting in schools deserves widespread commendation, as does your avowed intention to establish scholarships in penmanship.

"More strength to your elbow—or perhaps I should rather say your forefinger and thumb!

Yours faithfully . . ."

The Institute's reply (which, no doubt for adequate reasons, was typewritten) was addressed to A. R. Eales, and began:

"DEAR MR. EALES (?),—If we are right in thinking that you wish to buy a horse, may we respectfully point out that your letter was sent to the wrong address? Or perhaps put into the wrong envelope? This Institute, which is concerned solely with the improvement of the national standard of handwriting, has no connection with horse-trading or (assuming the minority interpretation of one of our directors to be the more correct) with the Married Women's Property Act . . ."

A joke is a joke, but tomfoolery of this kind seemed to me to be going altogether too far.

"SIRs (I wrote),—I think I may claim to have as keen a sense of humour as the next man, but you will forgive me for reminding you that there is a point at which fun degenerates into ill manners. To reply to a letter of congratulations and good wishes in a manner implying that you were unable to make out a word

of that letter correctly appears to me to be more boorish than amusing. If there is some deeper motive behind your extraordinary reply, if indeed this is your method of encouraging members of the public to become your clients, I can only say that the whole thing smacks of chicanery.

"Perhaps, on second and wiser thoughts, you will now see fit to send me a suitable apology. I do *not* ask, as a prominent personage has recently done, for the punishment or dismissal of those responsible for your first ill-conditioned reply. All I require is ordinary courtesy."

That was plain enough, I think, and it was with mounting astonishment that I read their rejoinder.

"DEAR MR. ELIAS,—Please accept our apologies for wrongly transcribing your name in our earlier communication.

"We regret, however, that your second letter, like your first, has proved beyond our resources here. Our utmost

endeavours have failed to piece together any coherent message, apart from the single phrase 'the wardrobe hinge smells of chicory' which you will understand, when read out of its context, forms no reliable guide to the gist of the remainder.

"We are accordingly taking the liberty of returning both your letters, with the request that you will have them typewritten and return them to us at your earliest convenience, when they will receive immediate attention."

Many men, I dare say, faced with such blank intransigence, would have thrown in their hands. But I take a certain modest pride in my handwriting, and accordingly replied by return of post:

"SIRS,—I am sending the first of the letters I addressed to you to an agency to be typewritten, as you request. I have instructed them by telephone to type it out *without further reference to me*, and I undertake to forward it to you exactly as received. We shall then very soon see whether my hand presents any difficulties to an independent reader *who has no axe to grind*."

I must frankly admit that the typewritten copy of my letter produced by the agency was a disappointment.

"DEAR SUE (it read),—May I bung away the fruits of complacency? Yes, our meeting went all right though Percy will argue to the crack of doom! As for Uncle Sam, bicycle handlebars are intolerably *de trop* in rest-homes; difficult in-laws are the complete end and Mick Whittaker, to say the least, is simply atrabilious. You should be proud to help the breadwinner in selecting drawings under good Commander Roe, and damn your absurd objection to Australian alcoholics in pawnshops.

"Many thanks for your album of postcards. I showed mother some, you fourflushing old thing!"

This ridiculous farrago confirmed my growing suspicion that what is wanted is not an Institute of Handwriting but Reading Classes in Educated Script. No wonder there are delays and difficulties in commerce when people are capable of misreading "elbow—or perhaps" as "album of postcards." How-

ever, having given an undertaking to forward this so-called copy of my letter to the Institute without alterations I felt obliged to do so, merely attaching a covering note to point out that there was no mention of a horse in the letter from start to finish. On second thoughts I added a P.S. requesting them to send me a helpful booklet, if such a thing were available.

The Institute has now sent me a polite but curt intimation that they do not deal in boathooks. I do not see that any progress is likely to be made by either side along these lines.



The Reef Lectures

FULL fathom five my armchair lies,
Unless I'm wrong in my belief
That I myself—not just my eyes—
Am resting on a coral reef . . .

How long has television banked on
People prowling through the plankton,
Watching with impressive patience
The gyrations of crustaceans
Through their telescopic lenses?
Fish go into frightful frenzies
Faced by underwater cameras—
Those two specimens look amorous!
One is striped and one is spotty . . .
My mistake, it's Hans and Lotte.

Supple, elegant and sleek
They swim before me once a week—
Look, no Hans! But what a lot of
Bubbles . . . Ah, he's got a shot of
Lotte (someone else behind her
Has them both in *his* viewfinder).
Now it's time to leave the Hasses
In their submarine crevasses—
Symbolizing, one supposes,
Ocean-bottom symbiosis.

One day perhaps, still with this pair
Of flippered television stars,
I'll—from the depths of my armchair—
Explore the waterweeds of Mars.

— ANTHONY BRODE

THEN AS NOW

It may comfort the Socialists to know that what is now being said of Mr. Gaitskell exactly echoes what was said of Mr. Balfour after the great Unionist defeat of 1906



FOLLOW ME, LEADER.

The Hind Legs (loq.): "MY DEAR ARTHUR, OF COURSE YOU'RE THE ONLY CONCEIVABLE HEAD, BUT WE'RE GOING MY WAY!"

February 14 1906



"Next year couldn't we go to a place that's been slightly less unspoiled?"

In the Footsteps of Lawrence By J. B. BOOTHROYD

DESPITE Mr. Rattigan's *Ross*, everyone seems to agree that the character of Lawrence remains pretty mysterious, and ex-R.A.F. types are particularly puzzled. What was eating him that he should make two separate attempts to wear that armpit-strangling other-ranks' uniform, apparently tailored with a blunt knife from hairy underfelt? Once might have been written off as a whim, but to come back for more was inexplicable.

But never mind that. For me, there is an inner mystery. How did the top brass at R.A.F., Uxbridge, ever rumble him? I can just see a more than usually well-read Warrant Officer* reporting to the C.O.

* And that's not saying much, actually.

"About A.C.2 Ross, sir."

"What about him?"

"I have reason to believe he's Lawrence of Arabia."

"You've been overworking, man. It's that mess-up you had to sort out with the duty rosters in the parachute section. Make out a thirty-six-hour pass and I'll sign it personally."

"Sir. Thank you, sir."

There is no mistaking the cadence of dismissal in a C.O.'s voice.

But I don't blame the old man. If R.A.F., Uxbridge, in Lawrence's day was anything like it was in mine, twenty years later, there were so many false identities going around, either assumed or alleged, that an officer who took any notice would have spent his time tearing up half the records in

S.H.Q. And my guess is that even when Ross had been finally accepted as Lawrence by Whitehall and plucked from his bleak barracks bed, no one at Uxbridge really believed it, but regarded it as the neatest dodge yet for getting back to civvy street. Anyone could fool the psychiatrists by rolling themselves up in linoleum and repeating "Toast and butter!" in a high, cracked voice . . . but this chap letting people think he was Laurence Olivier, or whoever it was, deserved credit for a new approach.

I myself reported to Uxbridge carrying a soprano saxophone, which I hoped to master if the war lasted long enough. The rumour that I was in fact Geraldo's kid brother spread through the camp like lightning, and that same evening a cookhouse corporal asked if I'd audition

him while he sang a song of his own composition called "Moanin' For You." I had never been addressed by a corporal socially, and it was hard to know what line to take. Luckily a drill-sergeant turned up at that moment and ordered me to go and read an announcement over the Tannoy system asking for volunteers for the station sports, and I came out ten minutes later to find everybody buzzing it round that I was Alvar Lidell. The drill-sergeant was gigantic, with a broken nose, and had been in charge of our intake that morning. I don't know who started it, but he hadn't called three names and numbers before the whole batch of us knew that he was Victor McLaglen's nephew and could knock down a file of men at a blow, like dominoes. I later found that he was a rather mild-natured man called Wilkins. I well remember his giving me a piece of pumice stone, then in short supply, which I have to this day.

Flight-Sergeant Cramborne, who spent his time arranging gas-exercises, was a high-up in a British subsidiary of Twentieth Century Fox, so it was said, and was a source of considerable potential embarrassment to airmen from various walks of life who had seized the chance of a fresh start by describing themselves as "actor" on their call-up documents. It was a relief to many of them, if not to the distinguished Flight-Sergeant, when a new recruit from Nottingham recognized him as the deputy manager of a smallish cinema there.

There was no way, of course, for my lowly circle to know what deceptions or misconceptions prevailed at officer level. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that in the commissioned sanctity of the Mess self-styled dons or architects were constantly being unmasked as remand home officials or jobbing builders; but we knew nothing of this and were

obliged to deal in rumours beyond our power to verify; it was surprising, in a Service noted for its democratic leanings, how many of these took a turn towards *Debrett* and *Burke*. Flight-Lieutenants held to be peers, baronets or at the very least Honourables in private life were eternally marching in couples up and down the edge of the parade-ground; as we stood there at attention our hungry imaginations peered from our eye-corners and saw them at Ascot with elegant women, waving languidly to a passing crowned head and opening yet another bottle of champagne. It still comes as a faint shock, even now, to run into one of them at, say, a cricket-match, and find that he is doing only moderately well for himself as chief clerk of an insurance company's branch office at St. Leonards.

Lawrence, of course, went about the whole thing in the wrong way. For a man trained in tactics by Allenby, a man who had tied the Turks in knots, got himself accepted as an Arab by Arabs, he took surprisingly little care in the planning of his Uxbridge campaign. At a station so rich in false barristers, orchestral conductors, film-stars, dukes and shipowners it was obvious that an airman who simply called himself Ross and claimed no fixed occupation would stick out like a sore thumb. And that, now I come to think of it, must have been how they rumbled him. If he'd had the sense to sign on as Lawrence of Arabia no one would have raised an eyebrow. It was happening all the time.

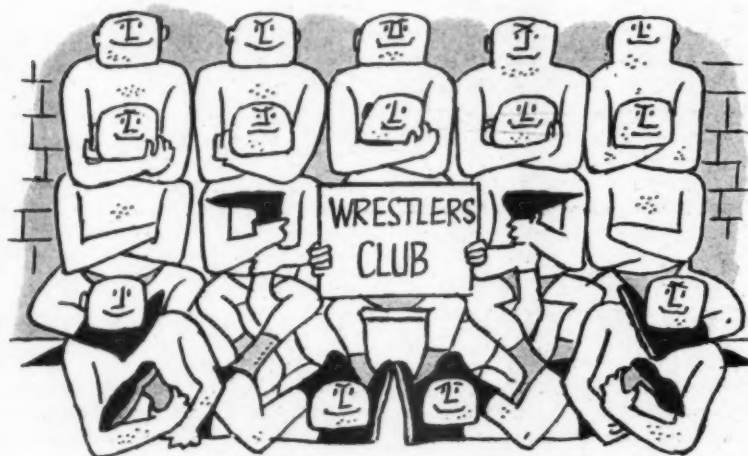
What's more, he'd have been alive to tell the tale; the tale that everyone, including Mr. Rattigan, keeps trying to tell, and not really getting us much further, simply because of the absence of ideal source material.

☆

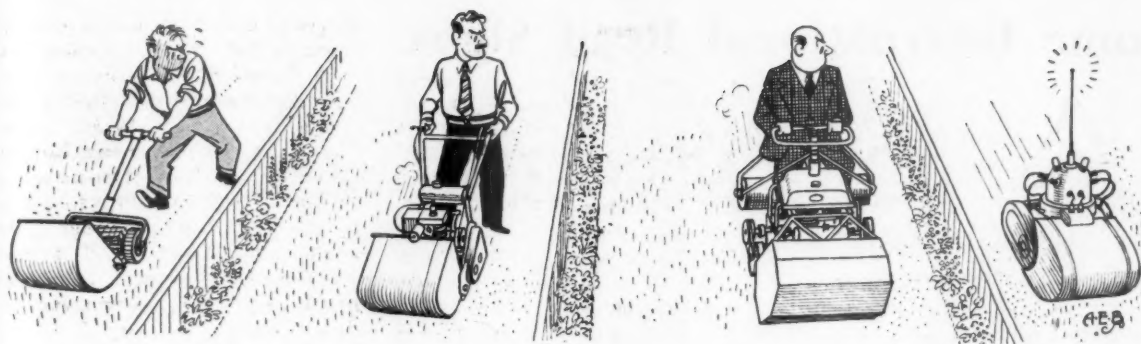
Sunset Glow

TO TOPPER, W. H., I wish renown;
Four score less one, he dons the
M.A.'s gown.
This mason builded better than he knew
Restoring Cambridge spires to fairer
view.
He flouts the sage who sighed "If age
but could"
And in the jargon of his trade "makes
good."

— F.L.M.



P.W.



The Writing on the Wall By PATRICK SKENE CATLING

MEGALOMANIACAL writers of questionable excellence and doubtful immortality (present company excepted, of course) might do worse than emulate the angryish, youngish group who had a plaque put up in their honour in Notting Hill the other day. It was the John London column in the *News Chronicle* that brought the news of this enterprising act of self-recognition most forcefully to my attention, and I want the people who produce the column to know that it gave me the biggest thrill of 1960 since the day I discovered coffee-flavoured halva at Britain's first national Delicatessen Exhibition.

Affixed to the façade of a Chepstow Road boarding house that has recently been sold for conversion into flats, the plaque says:

IN THIS HOUSE
LIVED
1955-1960
COLIN WILSON
JOHN BRAINE
STUART HOLROYD
TOM GREENWELL
GRETA DETLOFF
BILL HOPKINS
"HALLOWED BE THESE
PRECINCTS"

Mr. Hopkins, who supervised its installation, said the plaque had been made by Laurence Bradshaw, the sculptor who designed the Karl Marx memorial in Highgate, and the fee had been fifty guineas.

The circular, central part of the plaque, inscribed in white on a blue ground, resembles most of the two hundred and fifty commemorative

tablets that the London County Council has put up since 1903 on buildings in which celebrated men and women formerly resided.

Having lived with this story day and night for the past few hours I can now reveal that if Hopkins and Co. had got their plaque from the Dorset firm that supplies the L.C.C. they would have saved £12 10s. 0d., or approximately £2 1s. 8d. each, or more than two weeks' rent at the rate at which they had been paying in Chepstow Road. And of course if they had been content to wait for the L.C.C. to honour them with a plaque they would have saved their entire fifty guineas; but this policy would not have been without possible disadvantages from their point of view.

According to the L.C.C. archivist who knows all about this plaque business, the Council's Town Planning Committee turns down about half the nominations for plaques and hardly ever waives the rule requiring the nominees to die twenty years before plaques may be awarded. Twenty years after death is a long time to wait.

Furthermore, in explanation of what Hopkins and Co. actually did, it must be pointed out that their plaque is flanked by two winged cherubim blowing trumpets like the rubber plungers that plumbers use to clear blocked drains—not very grand as memorial decorations sometimes go, perhaps, but a lot more elaborate than the embellishments of the L.C.C. plaques for Florence Nightingale, Oscar Wilde, Captain William Bligh, Sigmund Freud, Sir Charles Dilke, Mahatma Gandhi, and José de San Martín ("The Liberator"), to name but a few at random

from the list I always keep in my desk. The L.C.C. archivist, so modest that she would not allow her name to appear in these pages, let alone on a plaque outside a building, said there had been "an even worse enormity" than the plaque in Notting Hill.

"There's a fruiterer in Soho," she told me in an absolutely exclusive interview, "who has put up a plaque, one like ours but twice as big, saying that Joshua Reynolds once lived there. We know he didn't." The L.C.C. plaque for Sir Joshua is in Leicester Square. The fruiterer possibly believes that his plaque, unauthorized though it may be, helps to sell bananas, just as Hopkins and Co. possibly believe that theirs may help to sell their books.

"We have no copyright on plaques," the archivist said. "If people want to put them up, true or false, we can't stop them. They put that one up in Notting Hill for a lark and that's it."

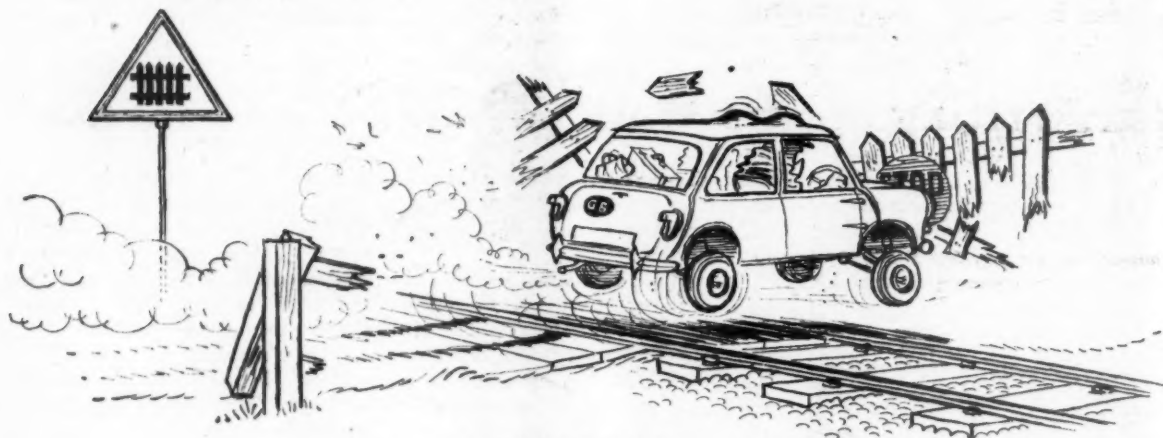
Was it just a lark? I don't think so. The plaque in Chepstow Road may prove to have signified the beginning of an era of expanding opportunities for artists and others publicly to express their self-esteem. Plaques are easy to start with. As Mr. Hopkins said, with all the dreamy idealism of a germ warfare research biologist, "We might even start a rash of them going up all over the country."

After that it should not be very long before people whose visions of themselves transcend the actualities will pay vanity presses to fulfil, or seem to fulfil, their fondest ambitions with triumphant fake biographies in realistic imitation volumes of *Burke's Peerage* and *Who's Who*.

Some International Road Signs



are obvious to the meanest intelligence ...
others less so ...

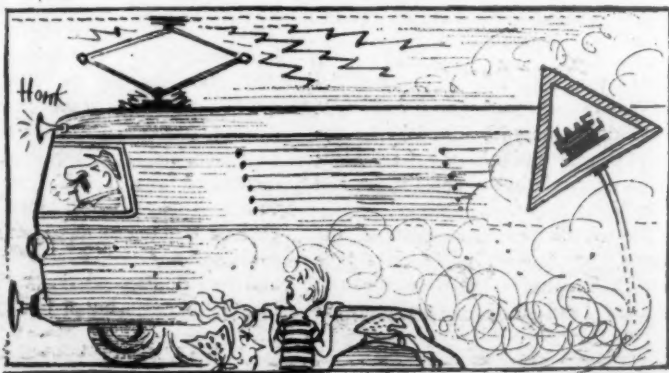
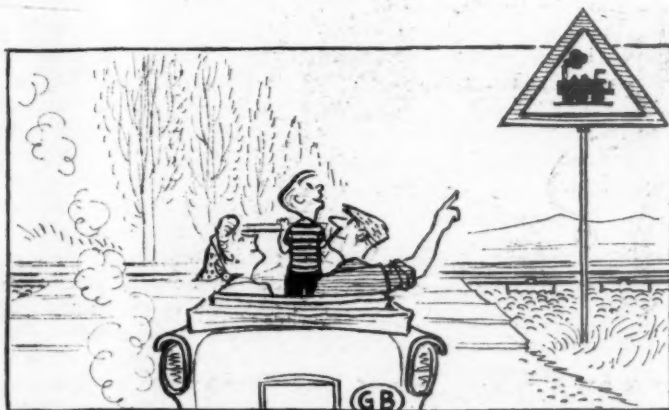


until it's a little late.



"Nice to see one in English."

You know where you stand with this one ...

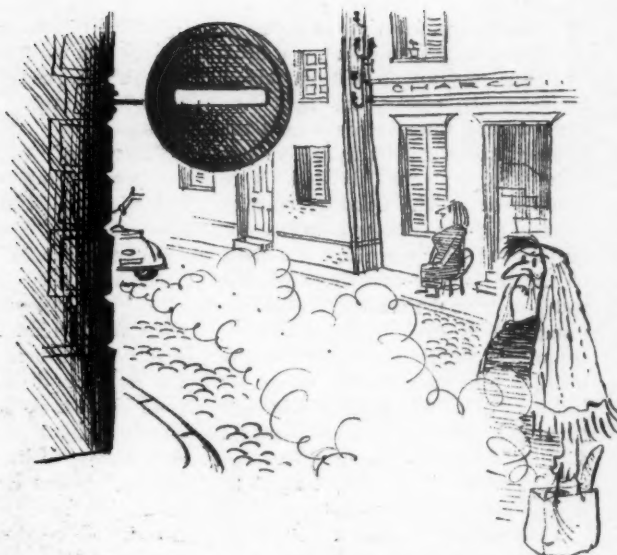


... but this one cheats.

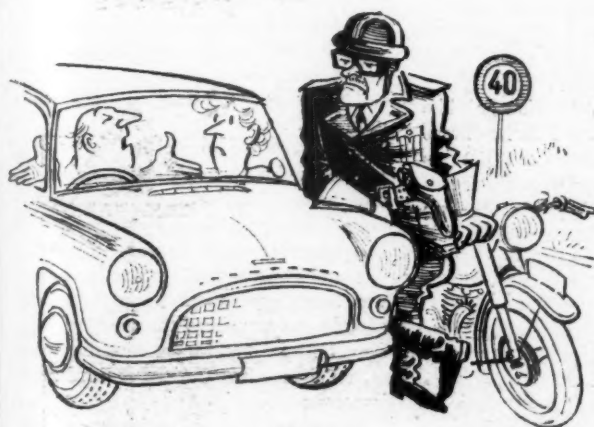
You baffle your way through, somehow . . .



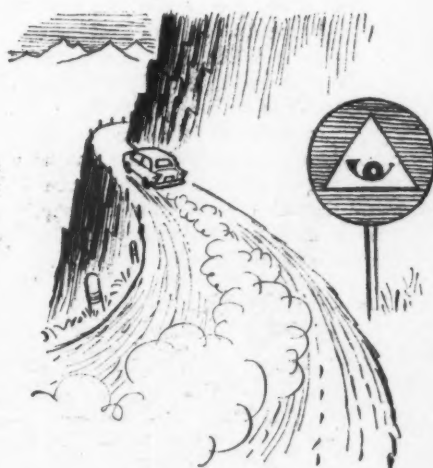
"Dammit, we went through that dump yesterday morning!"



"Look here, if they won't take the trouble to say minus what . . ."



"Say to him 40 kilometres, 40 miles, what's the difference?"



"Beware of Snails?"



. . . until you get home to a system that makes sense.

Drag

By BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

I HAD as good a view as anybody. I was fielding at mid-on. Springall came up to bowl from about twelve yards, planked his right foot down a good three inches behind the bowling crease and let fly. The two yells "Huzzat!" and "N'ball!" were simultaneous. The Chedsley opening batsman (he was wearing a Polytechnic cap) rubbed his upper thigh as a cloud of Blanco mushroomed from his left pad just above the ankle and gradually dispersed.

Springall returned to his bowling mark deep in thought. We waited for him to make the silly scuffing *chassé* that launches him into his run. But he stood still, like a man waiting for a 6A bus.

"D'you mind standing back?" he said politely to the umpire.

The umpire backed a couple of paces.

"A bit farther," said Springall.

"You're dragging," said the umpire. "I shall no-ball you even if I stand by the sight-screen." (Actually, we have no screens at Whiteheath, and we all thought it pretty bad form for a visiting umpire to draw attention to the fact.)

"Never been no-balled in all my twenty years," said Springall. And he was about to say more when he became aware that his captain, from first slip, was signalling to him to carry on. He charged up to the wicket.

"N'ball!" screamed the umpire, and the ball went for four, just missing mid-on's left shoulder.

"What's that for then?" said Springall.

"Dragging."

"Dragging my foot!" said Springall redundantly. I'm bowling as I've always bowled."

"I've no doubt," said the umpire, "but this is 1960. Now I'll be reasonable. You put your back foot down three feet behind the crease and I'll pass you. Otherwise, you've had it. I'm sorry, but the law's the law." Then from his coat pocket he drew a white circular object which turned out, surprisingly, to be a Continental beer mat and placed it carefully one long stride back from the crease.

Springall completed the over with two long-hops and two full tosses, with one of which he hit the Chedsley opener loud and clear in the pit of the stomach. The over cost sixteen runs.

During Harris's over Springall and the captain were in consultation.

"Let me change ends, Skip."

"Well, all right, but Harris won't like it. You know as well as I do he always prefers that end, where he's got his arm in the cedars and the chance of pitching on the ridge." (This ridge is a feature of the Whiteheath wicket: it is a minor earthwork dating from the last

war and certain Home Guard manoeuvres with a Churchill tank over a terrain the consistency of hot jam.)

"He won't no-ball Harris," said Springall.

"Care to bet? If he's as keen as this on dragging he's probably on the lookout for bent arms and all that. Still, might as well try it. They're twenty already and I reckon fifty's a winning total today. I'll throw an over up myself, and you can take the next one at Harris's end."

Harris was baffled by the change, but he is a good team man and accepted the move merely as additional support for his view that City stockbrokers make helpless captains of village clubs.

The skipper's over increased the Chedsley score to 32. Then Harris bowled. His first two balls were uneventful, except that the batsman put up a dolly to point off the first, and broke his bat hitting a six off the second. The third ball was a very short long hop. Slow-medium.

"I'm warning you," said the umpire. "Any more bumpers this over and I shall report you."

"Who to?" said Harris, in genuine perplexity.

"Never you mind who!" said the umpire . . .

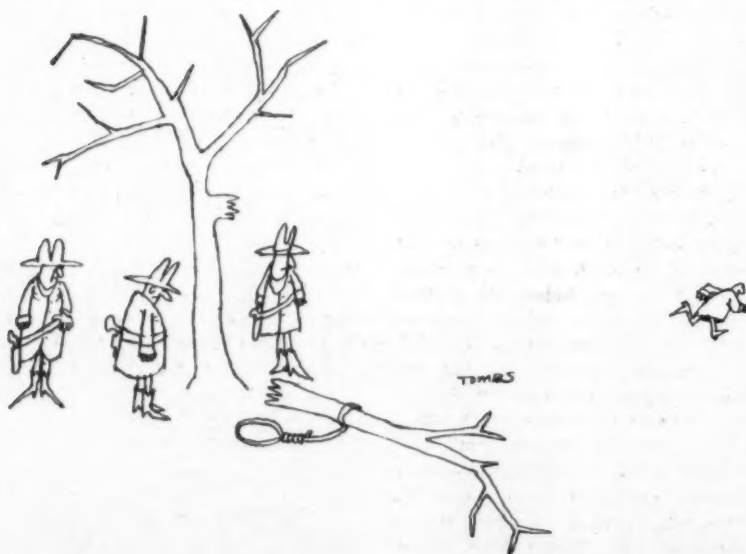
Thirty-five for no wicket.

The trouble started when the visiting umpire saw that Springall was about to bowl from the other, the home, end. Immediately he walked across—Chester-like—to consult *our* umpire. There was much gesticulation, the opposing captain ran out from the pavilion, the deep-fielders lay down, the batsmen sat on their bats. Carless at third man lit a cigarette.

Our captain stuck to his guns and refused to allow the visiting umpire to change ends in pursuit of Springall. The visiting captain apologized and urged his man to go easy with his conscience and interpretation of the laws. The umpires quarrelled, waved their arms about, and there, suddenly, was the Chedsley man's pipe flying from his mouth. He picked it up and left the field. Our man followed. Springall, almost in tears, ran to his motor-bike and roared away without paying his tea-money.

The game was resumed, without umpires, and ended in a tie, 57-all.

I have the beer mat as a souvenir.





3. The Sunken City

NO doubt the bare facts of the story of how Mrs. Dyson and I discovered the lost city of Atlantis will be familiar to most of my readers. Atlantis is not discovered every day of the week, and there was a fair amount about it in the papers at the time, with a photograph of Mrs. Dyson holding a bunch of carnations, part of a wedding-group taken in a garden in Bayswater in 1923. "Noted botanist (seated left) finds Atlantis," said the caption.

I don't think it has ever been made generally known, however, that we came across the place quite by accident, while looking for my glasses.

We were in the North Atlantic at the time, on the *qui vive* for mysterious fish, and my glasses fell off at about twenty-five to four on a warm Tuesday afternoon while I was leaning over the side thinking how vast and inscrutable the sea is when you really come to weigh it up. One of the ear-pieces had been loose for several weeks, but there's not much time for mending things when you're afloat with Mrs. Dyson, what with putting sea-horses in jars, identifying molluscs, checking the underwater cameras for rust, pressing sea-anemones between the pages of heavy books, holystoning the deck, and so forth, and I had put it off and put it off until the inevitable happened, as it so often does if you're not careful.

With characteristic acuteness of observation Mrs. Dyson saw the glasses glint in the sunlight as they fell, and cried out "There go your specs!" She had been dozing in a deck chair after

a hard morning putting numbered rings on five hundred fresh-caught mackerel, part of her contribution to the International Geophysical Year. She was wearing her self-contained shark-proof breathing apparatus, a pair of tennis-shoes, and a bathing-costume that had at one time belonged to her father. ("What does it matter?" she used to say. "I don't give a hoot for appearances when I'm a couple of fathoms down.") In a trice she jammed on her goggles, stepped into her flippers, scrambled up on to the rail of the ketch and stood poised for a moment, blotting out the sun and part of the Gulf of Cadiz. "It's not deep here," she said confidently. "With any luck they'll have landed on the Continental Shelf—they may not even be broken!" Then she dived into the sea in her own inimitable fashion (she always hits the water lying on her side, with her knees drawn up and her mouth wide open) and vanished beneath a miniature water-spout that had the scuppers awash in a twinkling.

As I recall the incident now I have no doubt in my mind that the intrepid woman didn't really care whether she found the glasses or not: it was simply an excuse to get below the surface. Ever since her late teens Mrs. Dyson has found her greatest happiness while marching up and down on the seabottom, drawing unusual shrimps on her underwater slate or catching electric eels in a butterfly net. She (or rather her ghost-writer, Griffiths) summed up the attractions of this watery world in a memorable passage in the second chapter of *Dive With Felicity Dyson*:

In these timeless regions one becomes aware as never before of the insignificance of man. Here all is peace, an infinity of changeless space, with only the plaintive murmur of the sting-rays to disturb the stillness. Here one can be alone with one's Id, rather like when flying an aeroplane, and feel something of the limitless wonder of existence. Then, too, there is the feeling that one is master of a hostile element. Here in the cool green haunt of whale and grampion . . .

There's a good deal more of it, and it's very true. But I happen to know that the chief driving force behind Mrs. Dyson's passion for slopping about in the primeval ooze is the memory of the day when she came across an old box full of half-crowns and Georgian sugar-bowls in eight feet of water not a stone's throw from the Devil's Causeway, and made enough for ten days in Buxton with a friend called Veronica. Since then she has been known in her family as the Water Baby, and there is hardly a stretch of ocean mapped on the Transverse Mercator Projection that has not seen the flash of her white, chubby knees or heard the swish of her patent telescopic explosive harpoon at one time or another.

Some of her exploits before the Atlantis episode were awe-inspiring enough in all conscience. She was probably the first frogwoman to write "Kilroy Was Here" in indelible paint on the keel of a United States aircraft-carrier during manoeuvres, and certainly the last. Wearing an ordinary old-fashioned screw-on diving-suit she once walked from the Eddystone Lighthouse to a point on the Cherbourg Peninsula, clipping seventeen minutes off the existing record for the trip (three months) and living entirely on bread and marmalade lowered four times a day from the supply-ship. She has discovered wrecks that even the Admiralty didn't know about, and brought back bits to prove it, including two swivel chairs in quite reasonable condition and one small anchor.* It was she, again, who stalked and captured a fully-grown formaldehyde, the deadly fossil fish with feet, which has defied the

*She had to give this back. It belonged to a yacht on which a biscuit manufacturer was throwing a party, and just before the last waltz the bo'sun noticed that they'd drifted well out into the main shipping lanes, and there were several people on board who had to catch late buses.

processes of natural selection for close on a million years and which bit her on the thumb as she was shoving it into the boat. (It has since been stuffed, and elderly men are trying to work out whether it proves anything.) Then there was the narrow escape she had in the Tasman Sea soon after I became acquainted with her. She was a hundred yards down, taking samples of the water for some people to analyse, and as she told us later, she had been gossiping only five minutes before with Lotte Hass. "I came round the corner of an interesting rock formation," said Mrs. Dyson, "and there she was, waiting for a thing like a kind of worm to keep still so she could study it. 'Good afternoon,' she wrote on her slate. 'Do you happen to have seen my husband anywhere?' I hadn't, so we just sat there chatting for a bit, and then I said I really had to go as I had to get these samples." At all events, the next thing that happened was that we in the boat suddenly saw her rope start to jerk in Morse code. "Come at once," the message said. "This is Mrs. Dyson, and I think I've got the bends." We were short-handed as it happened, owing to a muddle in the holiday roster, but we managed to get down to her somehow, just as a lot of limpets were beginning to settle on her fleshy parts. The trouble turned out to be nothing more alarming than a touch of rheumatism in the end, but it was an anxious half-hour for all concerned. That night, as a mark of gratitude, Mrs. Dyson doubled our rum ration.

People going down to find out whether a particular ocean is deep enough for official purposes have often had to fight to keep her out of their expeditions, for there is not a lot of space in a bathyscaphe and she is notorious for getting restless and moody when the action flags. She is at present planning a bathyscaphe of her own, with two rooms and a kitchenette (share bath), so that she can walk about on the way down if she likes, and smoke a pipe. When the craft is ready she hopes to prove that there is a hole twelve miles deep just south of the Chagos Archipelago, where you could put things. She is to be backed by a national newspaper, unless something else crops up in the meantime.

She has also, of course, discovered and photographed innumerable fish

and what are vividly referred to in *Dive With Felicity Dyson* as "denizens of the deep."

"Some of the denizens I have photographed," she says in the commentary she recorded for our famous series of nature films, *The Lower Depths*, "are very pretty, while others are not. Here comes a denizen now. It is called a speckled trophy, or sea-dog. It is not a pretty fish. Here is the trophy hiding in the mud. Now you see a crab approaching. Now the trophy waves its filaments. 'What can this be?' says the crab, very puzzled. Do you see his lips moving as he speaks? Now the sea-dog opens its monstrous throat. Poor crab! 'Dear me,' he cries. 'Little did I think I would make a sea-dog's breakfast when I left home this morning!' But that is the relentless pattern of life in the deep. Goodbye, little crab. Here comes a shoal of herring. Do you see them? That is my assistant looking for his flipper. Where can it be? Oh, now he has found a rare kind of coral! But what is this peeping out of the coral? It is a jacaranda fish. What luck! There are only nine jacaranda fishes left. Do you see its poisonous teeth? Now my assistant is trying to pull it out of its hiding-place. It will make a splendid specimen. Here you see me taking the photograph. My hair was a mess that day. But what has happened to my assistant? Here you see the jacaranda fish pulling him into its hiding-place. It is a dramatic scene. Here you see me rising to the surface. I have enough specimens for one day. Next week I will show you how the bugle fish makes itself invisible by knocking two pebbles together. And so, Goodnight from the South-Western Pacific Basin."

Some television critics have suggested that my fight with the jacaranda fish was staged, but this is not so. It took me a quarter of an hour to get my head properly out of its mouth, and when I finally reached the ship they were on the point of clearing away the tea-things. My other contribution to the film was to sit through it in the cutting-room aft and make glub-glub noises into a tape-recorder for the sound-track. It needed split-second timing, for each glub had to coincide with a bubble coming out of Mrs. Dyson's breathing apparatus. (Incidentally, for very close shots in shallow water Mrs. Dyson usually

employs a stand-in called Anita. We spotted her in a night-club in Bahia doing a speciality act with doves. "After all," says Mrs. Dyson, "I'm not as young as I was, and you can't deny that my arms are a little on the plump side." I must say Anita has provided many picturesque shots and an intriguing cover for *Dive With Felicity Dyson*, besides being an amusing companion.)

At any rate, as I was saying, over the side after my glasses on that sunny Tuesday afternoon went Mrs. Dyson in a trice, and the next thing I knew her head had reappeared above the surface and she was staring up at us as though puzzled. At last she pulled off her mask.

"Have you people any idea what I'm standing on?" she shouted.

"No," we said—and indeed, it seemed unlikely, on the face of it, that she was standing on *anything*.

"I am standing on the roof," said Mrs. Dyson, "of a greengrocer's shop."

So there it was. The fabulous Atlantis! Men had searched high and low for it for donkey's years, and all Mrs. Dyson had to do was jump off a boat. I need hardly tell you that every member of the expedition, not a little intrigued by this turn of events, was down there like a shot, and we must have spent well over an hour prowling through the deserted streets and taking snaps. It was an uncanny experience. You would open the front door of some humble dwelling and a gophy would swim out of the front parlour with a sheepish look. There were fish all over the place: lying in wait on staircases, skulking in cupboards, drifting in and out of the bungeholes of wine-jars—we even came across one fast asleep in a crudely fashioned goldfish bowl.

"Well, I must say," said Mrs. Dyson at one point, "I never saw anything quite like this before. Just look there—a dining-table set for three, and the knives and forks still on the plates. Can you picture the scene? Can you hear their terrified cries? 'Never mind the coffee, wife! Make for the hills . . .!' Oh, Debussy should have lived to see all this."

I have always thought that in one respect it was Mrs. Dyson's finest hour. For when we had looked our fill, and fastened ropes around all the simple ornaments of solid gold or silver that we could lay our hands on, she called a meeting on the steps of the town hall,





and writing her appeal laboriously on her slate, made us promise faithfully never to divulge the whereabouts of this drowned city to a living soul. "Otherwise," she passionately scrawled, "we all know what would happen. Day excursions from Margate in glass-bottomed boats. Skin-divers carving their initials on these graceful marble pillars. Under-water holiday camps. The place would be like Hampstead Heath on Whit Monday in no time, and we cannot—we mustn't let it happen."

Deeply moved, we all wrote "Never!" on our slates, and held them up. Then we strolled back to the surface by way of a steep hill lined with statues, got back into the boat, pulled up our ropes, packed the gold and silver into crates, paid off the native bearers, and set sail for home. Mrs. Dyson sold the story to one of the dailies the next day for an undisclosed sum, but neither she nor anybody else has ever let slip the whereabouts of that strange, lost town beneath the sea. I did go back myself once, months later, on the offchance that my glasses might turn up, but I couldn't find a thing worth lifting.

I have often wondered since where the rest of that stuff ever got to.

Next week:

At Home with Aborigines

Vouchers Accepted

Meal tickets have grown into big business

By E. S. TURNER

THE meal ticket has risen in the social scale. Not so long ago it was a chit which you handed to a beggar. He did not thank you for it, and more probably he abused you, for the good reason that it was not negotiable for beer or cigarettes. You passed on, feeling both benevolent and sharp; a splendid feeling.

Nowadays a meal ticket is something you give to that merry baggage your typist; only, in order not to hurt her feelings, you call it a luncheon voucher. If the critics are to be believed she then goes out and does her best to trade it for groceries, cigarettes and eye-shadow.

Only the other day Mr. Eric Fletcher, M.P. for Islington, was protesting vigorously about misuse of luncheon vouchers and urging the Chancellor to take suitable steps. The biggest firm operating the voucher system claims that more than ninety-nine per cent of

its vouchers are correctly used. It has what it calls security officers on the road looking for abuses. Unethical eating-houses are struck off its register.

Even if all vouchers were used as intended—that is, to improve the breed and stamina of employed persons—the scheme would still provoke controversy, both social and fiscal. This controversy will not lessen, because the system is fast expanding and the stage may be reached when only mugs and the self-employed (two barely distinguishable classes) will pay for their own luncheons.

Legend says that the latter-day boom in luncheon vouchers began in 1945 when a doctor in a London clinic, worried over the pallid looks of his office girls, discovered that they were not eating a proper lunch. He therefore gave them vouchers which could be exchanged for meals, and meals only. If any momentary fear of contravening

the Truck Acts clouded his mind he did not let it deter him. In that welfare-minded day the idea spread rapidly and within ten years there were more than four thousand private schemes of this kind. Owners of restaurants, while appreciating the stimulus to trade, were developing tics through counting piles of multi-coloured slips, plaques and tokens, posting off the appropriate bills and waiting, often for a long time, for payment.

At this point, in 1955, a 28-year-old accountant, Mr. John Hack, had the idea of starting a business to handle luncheon vouchers exclusively, to print the tickets, compile a registry of restaurants and pay the bills promptly. The advantage to the typist was that she would no longer be compelled to patronize the two or three restaurants on the doorstep but could lunch farther afield. After a year Mr. Hack's company, Luncheon Vouchers Ltd., was backed by nine major catering organizations and the boom was on. The four-thousand-odd private schemes have dwindled to about one thousand, and the firm now issues four million vouchers a month, eighty per cent of which are used in London. It has cut its service charge to threepence in the pound. To find Mr. Hack's photograph you must look in success periodicals with names like *Achievement*.

The Inland Revenue was not asleep while this was happening; indeed, some of its inspectors grew very fidgety. Jealous observers pointed out to the Chancellor that yet another privileged class was being created, that a person who was given an issue of 3s. vouchers enjoyed, in effect, a tax-free income of £40 a year. And why, they demanded, was the employer allowed to charge the cost of vouchers against profits? Mr. Heathcoat Amory showed reluctance to come down on a system which, he was assured, was helping to rid the cities of skinny young women. Last year he finally confirmed that luncheon vouchers would be tax-free provided their value was not more than three shillings.

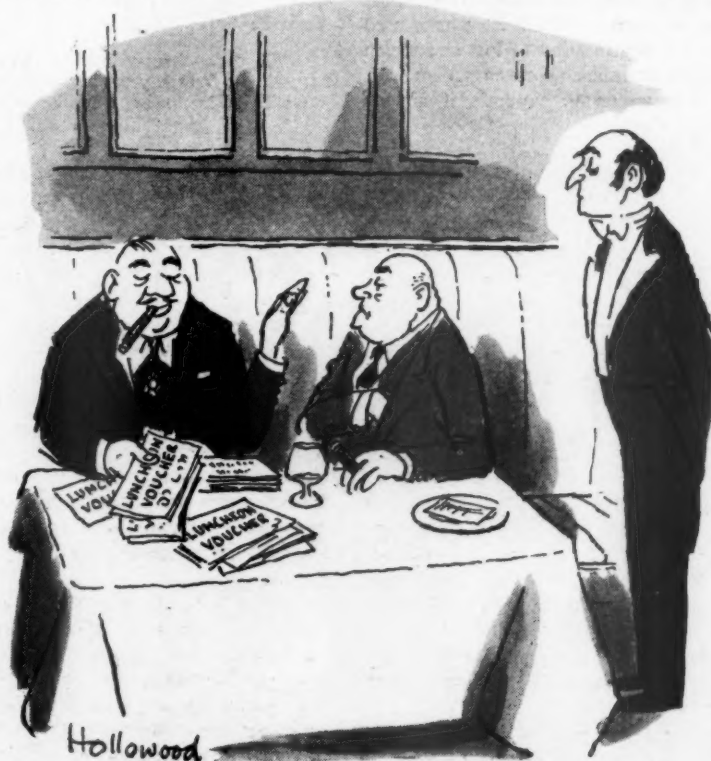
Inevitably, he laid down conditions. The coupons were to be non-transferable (a rule he presumably knew was unenforceable) and were to be used only for the purchase of *bona fide* luncheons, not "groceries and provisions (including canned foods), alcoholic beverages, tobacco, confectionery,

etc." The question "What is a *bona fide* luncheon?" will provide the lawyers with good clean fun some day. Sandwich bars take vouchers, so presumably sandwiches constitute a *bona fide* meal, if you eat enough of them. But if an employee wishes to lunch in the office, or in the park, on a pork pie and a banana, on a couple of rolls and a half-Camembert, or for that matter on a tin of pilchards, why should he be made to sit down to brown Windsor soup and sausage-and-mash?

There is nothing to stop an employee eating light snacks at his own expense for three days and then splashing the saved-up coupons on an expensive meal the next day. But he must eat the whole meal himself and not treat a friend, otherwise he is "transferring" his vouchers. The notion that one can save up a couple of weeks' supply of vouchers and then lunch at the Savoy Grill is erroneous; the Savoy Grill would first have to apply for admission to the directory of those firms prepared to accept luncheon vouchers. It is possible to think of all kinds of snags and loopholes, but obviously a scheme of this kind must be operated to a

great extent on trust and common sense. In the House of Lords last year Lord Saltoun asked whether the tax-free figure could be raised to five shillings. He was told by the Earl of Home that it would not be justifiable to expand an existing privilege in an upward direction. His Lordship then asked the Earl if he knew where a reasonable luncheon could be got for three shillings. "No," replied the Earl, "but I will put my noble friend in touch with my daughter." (*Laughter.*)

In fact luncheon vouchers are available in a number of denominations, from one shilling to five shillings. Even the Earl of Home's daughter might find it difficult to find a reasonable meal for one shilling, but she would be sensible enough to realize that the shilling voucher was intended as a contribution only. There is something of a conflict between a generation which has been conditioned to say "Why should I pay for my own lunch?" and an older generation which says either "Why the devil shouldn't you?" or "Why shouldn't you pay part of it?" Detached observers, accustomed all their lives to paying for their own meals, find it odd



that intelligent youth, in a day of good wages, should have to be cozened into taking food; but there it is.

On the charge of creating a privileged class the sponsors of luncheon vouchers say with some justification "Why pick on us? Look at all the hundreds of thousands of people who lunch in subsidized works canteens, directors included. Look at those who have free lunches on the firm. Look at the thousands lunching on expense accounts. Look at all the tax-free privileges, not necessarily in food; enjoyed by Civil Servants and employees of Government boards." The Chancellor knows that a fearful task awaits him if ever he attempts to establish absolute justice in the field of subsidized eating. He will doubtless prefer to leave the luncheon voucher set-up as an unofficial extension of the welfare state, so long as abuses are kept down. Employers will increasingly accept the system not necessarily because they want to turn their typists into bonnie lasses but because girls tend not to answer advertisements which fail to dangle this bait. (The police, incidentally, are well-disposed towards the idea of luncheon vouchers, since these bear control numbers which have been used for the identification of lost and stolen wallets or similar possessions.)

It is wrong to suppose, if anyone

does, that luncheon vouchers are issued only to low-salaried staffs. Persons earning £1,000, £2,000 and more feel no social stigma in accepting them—"They keep giving me these things, old boy." When the old boys get together in an accommodating buffet bar the accumulated vouchers buy more beer than sandwiches; but already, perhaps, the security officers are sniffing at the doors. It would be difficult to prove that luncheon vouchers have improved the health of £2,000-a-year men.

Who, then, are the luckless persons not entitled to luncheon vouchers and the tax benefits deriving therefrom? The answer is: professional men, partners in firms, sole traders, authors, barrow-boys and all those eccentrics who seek to be self-supporting. If anyone in this class contemplates writing to *The Times* to suggest that persons unblest with luncheon vouchers should be entitled to a deduction of £40 from their taxable income, let him desist. The letter was published long ago.

Our Man in America

Round-up by P. G. WODEHOUSE

HEAVEN knows I would be the last person to criticize the Hartford N.Y. police, as fine a body of men as ever slapped a ticket on a double-parked motor car, but I must confess that there are times when I fail to understand how their minds work. I quote from the *New York Herald-Tribune*:

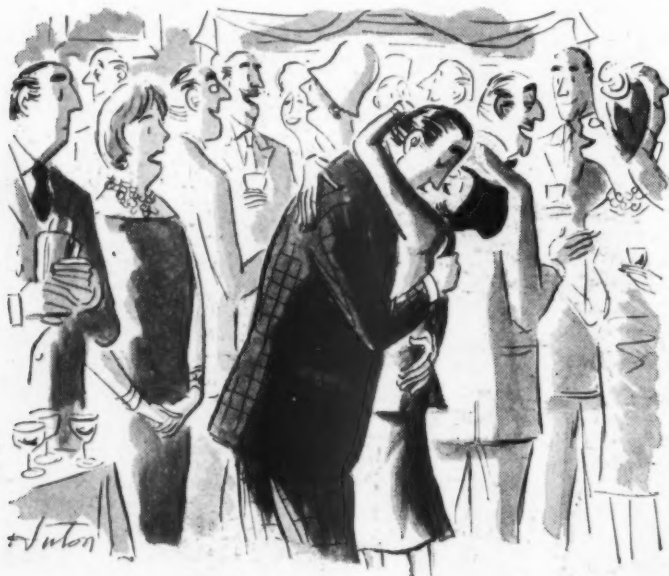
"A fifty-three-year-old Hartford man who for ten years has maintained a wife in Hartford and another in New

Haven with neither of them the wiser was held in \$2000 bond to-day on a charge of idleness."

Idleness, I'll trouble you. If there is one citizen who is kept perpetually on his toes and is hard put to it to find a moment when he can relax over a good book it is surely the bigamist. And when one reflects that the Hartford home had six little feet pattering about in it, while the New Haven establishment had no fewer than fourteen—in the absence of evidence to the contrary, one is assuming that each child had two legs—one feels that the term "idleness" would never have satisfied a precisian like the late Gustave Flaubert as being the *mot juste*.

The police, I believe, have some sort of story about idleness being a technical charge by which a suspect may be held pending investigation, but it sounds very thin.

Why a termite likes to get into the woodwork and eat it is a matter between it and its God, but, as any American householder will tell you, it does. Its idea of a balanced meal is a cut off the dining-room ceiling, followed by a strengthening slice of the floor. You can offer a termite the finest fillet steak or a perfectly prepared *Timbale de ris de veau Toulousane* and it will turn its head away and stick to wood, and this has caused mental anguish to thousands, for until recently it was not permissible to deduct termite damage from income tax.



"He never was much of a conversationalist."

"Termites," the authorities argued, "do not constitute casualty losses—that is to say, destruction of property of a sudden and unexpected nature," and the taxpayers retorted that if there was anything more sudden and unexpected than the abrupt emergence of a bunch of beastly ants with their mouths full of desirable suburban villa they had yet to hear of it.

"You could have knocked me down with a toothpick," said many of them when describing their emotions on seeing the creatures for the first time.

It is pleasant to be able to record that the Bureau of Internal Revenue has at last seen the light, and as of even date, if the ceiling falls down on you accompanied by a shower of termites chewing busily and telling one another that there is nothing like a bit of wood for breakfast, you can chalk it up on the credit side when making out your annual return.

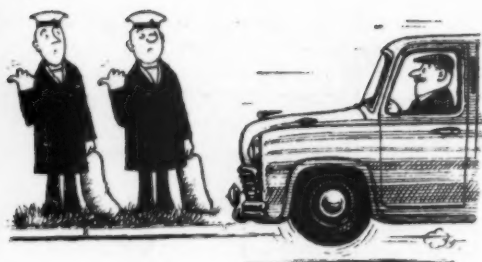
The only glum faces now seen are those whose homes have not been visited by the little fellows, and they are easily persuaded to close the deal when sallow men with shifty eyes pop out at them from dark alleys and mutter "Psst! Want a hot termite, brother?"

The American child has been copping it again from contributors to the correspondence columns of the daily papers. A Jackson Heights N.Y. resident, who seems particularly steamed up, writes:

"Some twenty years ago American children behaved like educated children, but to-day they act like spoiled brats. When they enter the subways they behave like gangsters and they definitely need the strong hand of authority to teach them that they cannot get away with murder."

The writer's occupation is not stated but it seems likely that he is one of those department store Santa Clauses who blossom with the mistletoe and holly at Christmas time, for all department store Santa Clauses take a jaundiced view of the modern child, and not without reason. Last December an infant entered one of the Fifth Avenue stores and having seated himself on the lap of the Santa Claus produced an ivory-handled penknife and with a muttered "This is what you get for double-crossing me and giving me the wrong toys a year ago,"





stabbed him so shrewdly with it that only the fact that he was wearing forty pounds of stomach padding at the time saved a human life.

"Lancelot has always been high-spirited," the child's parents, interviewed, told reporters.

Not much has been happening in Toledo, Ohio, lately, except to Mrs. Wilma Scroggins (30) of that city, who has been undergoing plenty. It seems that the other day she went to the dry-cleaning shop to pick up a bundle of clothes, and as it was quite a heavy bundle she was glad when a passing motorist offered to drive her to her home. He did so, and she gave him a dollar and thanked him. He thanked her and drove off, taking with him the bundle of clothes, estimated value a hundred dollars.

The following day was her day for going to the super-market and buying groceries. She bought \$20 worth and was tottering out with it when another good Samaritan came to her rescue. He took her home in his car, accepted a dollar for the ride and drove away with the groceries.

"Thanks, I'll walk," Mrs. Scroggins always says now if you catch her as she comes from doing her shopping and offer her a lift. She feels that there is a danger of this sort of thing becoming habit-forming.

☆

OVER TO YOU—OVER

"Mr. Amory: You will remember that between 1938 and 1952 it was entirely the other way round. During that period dividends increased by 100 per cent., whereas wages increased by 100 per cent. Therefore, what has happened since then has about restored the balance.

A.B.C.C. Parliamentary Bulletin

Weekend in Paradise

Some extracts from a very popular daily and from the diary of one of its readers

By R. G. G. PRICE

... arrange the six mops in order of attractiveness. The winners will receive a WEEKEND IN PARADISE as joint guests of the sponsors of the competition, Moppro Products, and this paper. Wafted by a fairy godmother's wand, the lucky couple will do all the exciting, wonderful things they have always dreamed of. Jane Piccadilly and Brian Haymarket will be telling you all about Mr. and Mrs. Winner's stay in the Royal Suite of a luxury hotel! Their enjoyment of the finest wines and dishes! Their calls on a leading couturier and a leading men's tailor to stock their wardrobe! Their visit to the theatre—no queuing up for them but a box to themselves! Their golden days and nights that will be imperishable memories in the years ahead.

... The winning entry was submitted by Colonel Sir Claud Mordaunt-Blythe-Keppel, Bt., of Keppel, Herefordshire.

... damned fool of a Head Keeper. I was just settling down to getting the Conservative Association accounts into some sort of order when Bathwick showed in two most curious looking people. We go in for all sorts of competitions, never know when something may turn up, and apparently we had won a spree. I told them to let Miss Peach have the details and the tickets and so on; but they insisted on my getting Tetty as they had been told to photograph us. Luckily she was just back from Loulou Hex Chetwynde's funeral so she was toggled up, but I was

in the old smoking jacket and cap I always wear for a long desk session.

... I can let you into a secret. The news we brought came as a tremendous surprise. We had intended to waft them back to London with us, plunging them into the glittering whirl of a new life before they could get their breaths, but they had several engagements and even for a visit to the Land of Dreams Come True they would not let anyone down.

... It was a bit difficult to fit in as the Earl has planted the twins on us next week. Then I must be in the chair for a part-heard case at Petty Sessions on Monday and Tetty has three flower shows to open during the next few days. We are taking a lodge in Connaught for a month and Julian is coming over as soon as the House rises. However, we are determined to get our prize and have managed to clear three days.

... The happy winners refused our offer of transport by king-sized car and preferred to make their own way from the country. We met them in the foyer, together with the manager and a bevy of cameramen. This is the hotel you think of when anyone mentions luxury.

... These people seem quite affable and willing but they obviously know nothing whatever about comfort. They had booked for us at a dreadful place that is always full of what Tim Lowther used to call "the autochthonous rich"

and where the game's never properly hung. I wasn't having that and I made them take us to Dacres Chambers, which is just as it always used to be. They do really look after you. They won't have anybody unless their family has always stayed there, and you eat in a civilized way in your own rooms, not in some ghastly monstrosity of a restaurant.

... Our guests lunched rather frugally. We can see they are not going to let their wonderful fortune go to their heads. I don't say their choice of luxuries would have been ours but we told them very firmly that it is their own treat and they are to have just whatever they want. They did not even drink the champagne that stood ready but Mr. Winner drank whisky and his good lady barley-water with their cold pigeon pie and stilton. After lunch we split up. I took Mrs. Winner to Raoul's, creator of the shimmering, exquisite toilettes...

... Teddy said it was not the kind of place she generally goes to for her clothes. Everything seemed very flimsy. She told the man to find her something that would keep out thorn when she goes to stay with Sybil in Kenya. Most of her clothes will stand up to anything at Keppel in the way of dogs or horses, but she wanted something tougher.

... I first introduced him to a special friend of mine who has blended my after-shave lotion since I was at school; but tastes vary and I did not press the point.

... I hardly ever use my club these days but I thought I would look in and see whether Dicky Manners would like a game. The man the paper had sent round with me to take charge of the bills tried to argue me out of the idea and began some awful drivel about being told to give me my first sight of the Festival Hall. I could not make out what he was talking about so I bade him a rather curt good afternoon.

... For dinner we arranged a gay party consisting of six of the most popular contributors to this paper, with Desirée Dawn and Gregory Hatch. Our magic carpet took Mr. and Mrs. Winner to the world-famous Mayfair restaurant, La Coupole Enchaînée. As we sat down in a friendly circle the manager presented Mrs. Winner with a lovely bouquet in

which she was able to recognize several varieties of rose she grows herself. Over the oysters, Desirée Dawn and Gregory Hatch told us all about their new film.

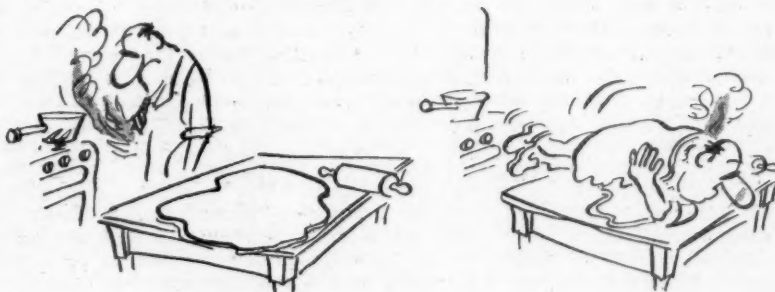
... and the sauce was a disgrace. Nobody at the table seemed to have the slightest idea of how rosemary should be used. The other people seemed to be employed by the paper. One really cannot trust what one reads in the newspapers if the people who write them cannot even criticize a meal intelligently. They were quite old enough to have learned. I sent for the chef and rated him and made him fetch the ingredients and make the sauce properly under my own eyes. There were also a youngish couple who did not seem to be journalists but were very enthusiastic about some kind of amateur dramatics.

... The box had been filled with the most gorgeous blooms and there was a casket of wonderful chocolates for Mrs. Winner. Eagerly leaning forward to miss nothing when the curtain rose...

... As we had both seen the show before, I looked round the house to see whether by any possibility there was anyone we knew. By a tremendous stroke of luck Archie and Eleanor had the box opposite so I took Teddy off to join them. The children were quite enjoying it so we old folk sat at the back and gossiped and then we went back to supper with them. It was pleasant to be back in our own world. I must remember to drop a line to the newspaper people. I suppose one does write a bread and butter letter when one has earned it all oneself. In any case, they might be wondering where we had got to...

Man in Apron

by Larry



Essence



of Parliament

THIS column has often recorded how the House has been compelled to paddle on with some pedestrian business while the great events of the world are unrolling themselves elsewhere. Never has that been more true than this week. When it assembled to debate the price of eggs on Monday there were few indeed who were not paying more attention to Paris than to Westminster, but at least it was expected that the House would be able to go quietly on for a few days before it was time for a report on what the Summit had achieved. The event we know. It meant that Mr. Turton's slashing attack on the Government's agricultural policy and what Mr. Nabarro elegantly called forty-five minutes of belly-aching from Mr. Wiley both went alike unheeded. It meant again that on Tuesday a crowded House assembled not to listen to Mr. Alport recommending that Ghana should remain in the Commonwealth but to see if Mr. Butler had anything to tell it from Paris. In answer to Mr. Grimond's private notice question Mr. Butler could say no more than that it was then 3.30 and that a meeting of the heads of governments had started at 3.0 but that Mr. Khrushchev had not yet shown up at it. By Wednesday there was of course nothing more to report except that Mr. Macmillan would come back on Thursday and make a statement to the House on Friday. Mr. Gaitskell asked whether the report could not be on Thursday. Mr. Butler was sympathetic but said that Friday would be the more convenient day. The House had to resign itself on Wednesday to Mr. Nabarro and the Socialists dividing it against the tobacco duty and to a comic wrangle as to whether Mr. Nabarro was leading the Socialists through the lobby or the Socialists were leading Mr. Nabarro; and on Thursday to further wrangles with Mr. Nabarro about income-tax and to some rather coy exchanges, accompanied by discreet giggles, between a bachelor Chancellor and a spinster Dame Irene Ward on "serious proposals."

With crowded benches on both sides it was a very different sort of Friday from the normal. It was a sad Mr. Macmillan who came to make his report—in a very different mood from that in which he had addressed the House a week before. Whatever arguments there may have been about the best method of negotiating, everyone had been willing to agree that since the Summit was to be the method tried there was nothing for it but to wish him success. The House had given him unanimous support in his journey, and it was well therefore that there were none so ungenerous as to indulge in a mood of "I told you so" in the hour of failure. It would have been strange if Mr. Macmillan's statement had told us anything very surprising. The sad story of the past was familiar, and to speculate much on the future before we were able to see what Mr. Khrushchev was planning for Berlin or elsewhere would obviously be premature. While not prophesying

calamity, Mr. Macmillan made no attempt to conceal his fear that this may mean a most serious change in Russian policy, nor his doubt whether in the present Russian mood any negotiations will prove possible. The U2 was, it seems clear, a mere pretext for a breakdown which was determined on anyway for other reasons—what exactly, no one can certainly say. The one hopeful feature of the situation was that the talks on the suspension of nuclear tests seemed, when everything else was going worse, to be going on the whole rather better. Perhaps this proves, Mr. Macmillan wryly observed, that experts are cleverer than politicians—and indeed perhaps it does.

No one was in any mood to try to score any points against the Prime Minister. Whatever arguments there might be, it was agreed, were best left for the debate on Monday week when things might perhaps be a little bit clearer. Mr. Gaitskell started off with admirable generosity, confessing that whatever else might not be clear it was at least clear that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had done all that they possibly could. He called for some closer co-ordination among members of N.A.T.O., but his request was too vague, as indeed he himself admitted, to get us immediately very much farther forward. The back-bench Conservative interventions showed of course good will but were so lacking in concrete suggestion that one could but wonder whether they were worth making. Mr. Cyril Osborne wanted the Prime Minister to broadcast either to Britain or preferably to Europe; but the Prime Minister, who made no bones about it that in his opinion the less said the better, turned that one down flat. "All statements," he said, "did harm." The only positive hints at a new policy came from Mr. Grimond and Mr. Healey. Mr. Grimond thought that all this might prove that there was something to be said for preferring the old and tried methods of diplomacy to the new techniques. The Prime Minister said that he had not heard such a plea from Mr. Grimond before; but in that he did him an injustice. It is an argument that has long been familiar on Mr. Grimond's lips. In reply to a further question about the Berlin situation the Prime Minister wisely refused to be drawn into saying anything until we know a little more how things are. Mr. Healey advanced the argument that it might be better in the future if these great matters were discussed not merely between the four Powers but if the rest of the world and the neutrals were also brought in—through the United Nations or in some other way. The Prime Minister sensibly replied that it was not merely a question of how these matters could be in theory most usefully discussed but in what conditions you could get the interested parties in fact to discuss them at all.

And so if not to bed at least to Emrys Hughes. When at last all was over and the House was preparing to go on to its not very exciting public business there was still Mr. Hughes with his point of order. It was that four Privy Councillors had been called on the Socialist side and no private Member. Strictly speaking he was not quite right. The true tally was three Privy Councillors and Mr. Healey, but as Mr. Healey was a front-bench speaker Mr. Hughes was right in spirit. His general point is right. Privy Councillors do talk too much, and many a shy and shrinking back-bencher often gets crowded out and discouraged as he tries to struggle down to the Pool of Bethesda. But I do not know if Mr. Emrys Hughes can reasonably be counted among the discouraged class. Whatever the obstacles, he seems to manage somehow or other to get his fair share of talking, and one can only wonder, seeing how much he talks as a back-bencher, what he would do if by any chance he were a Privy Councillor. There are some trials that we have been spared.

— PERCY SOMERSET

**A Different
Sort of
Friday**

**And so to
Emrys Hughes**

In the City



John Bull, Contractor

CIVIL engineering and public works contracting appear to come naturally to Britons. One reason may be that this was the first country in which the contractor applied his art with the tools of the industrial revolution. Another is that the Empire was built not, as was once said, in a fit of absentmindedness but very consciously indeed, with contractors' gangs dredging harbours, laying rails, cutting roads through the jungle, bridging the rivers.

In this tough business, competition is getting tougher. It was a salutary experience to have the main civil engineering contract for the Kariba Dam snatched from us in our own back garden some four years ago by the Italian syndicate Impresit. And let it be added that they have done a magnificent job, overcoming the handicap of the record floods which nearly swept two years' work down the Zambesi at the beginning of 1958. In spite of this the job was finished ahead of schedule.

Even with the Italians in charge of the main civil engineering contract, much of the work was in fact done by British firms. Their names fill a long list. The contracting groups of Costain and John Laing did much of the preparatory work. Dorman Long built the suspension bridge. Cementation poured in millions of tons of cement. The equipment in the hydroelectric station bears such comfortingly familiar names as A.E.I., English Electric, Ferranti and Metro-Vick.

Contracting is an adventurous business. In a world in which every underdeveloped country wants to become an industrial giant, if not overnight, at least within a couple of five-year plans, there is plenty of work to be done. One difficulty is to find the finance for vast schemes, where the client so often needs credit terms beyond the normal facilities of British banks and of the Government's Export Credits Guarantee Department.

A very representative contractors' report published last week by Richard Costain Ltd. refers to the warnings of a return to conditions of dearer and scarcer money which, says chairman Sir Richard, "do not inspire a contractor with confidence in tendering for long-term contracts." No less than 65 per cent of this group's work now lies overseas. It is busy altering the skyline of Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia; it is building a deep water harbour in Bridgetown, capital of Barbados; it is thrusting new railway lines across Nigeria; it is building gleaming new office blocks in Canada. At home it is completing the Maidstone bypass and has begun work on the Staines bypass.

Many of these contracts will be completed during 1961 and have yet to be replaced by further works of a similar nature. Nonetheless, Sir Richard Costain has the inborn optimism that must be part of any contractor's make-

up. The profits for this year should, barring disasters, be not less than those of 1959. As the group is earning more from its investments in property, the profits should in fact show a further improvement.

Another famous name in the contracting world, John Laing & Son, has just reported a slight decrease in its net profit; but the dividend is being maintained at 10 per cent on a capital which has been increased by a 1 for 8 scrip issue, so that there has been an effective rise of 1.11 per cent in the distribution. The company's recent work is to be seen in such diverse examples as the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral and the creation of entirely new industrial and housing estates near Vancouver, British Columbia.

If the Commonwealth needs a bit of shoring up to-day these and other great contracting firms are doing the job.

— LOMBARD LANE

In the Country



Fair Play for the Badger

THE nearest a great many people ever get to a badger is using an expensive badger-hair shaving brush every morning. This is a pity, for they are worth knowing for what they are, rather than just for what they have got.

And don't go blaming them for taking poultry, for in nine cases out of ten you will find that it was probably a fox—with some covering-up tactics by the local Hunt? Some badgers do have their faults—especially if you are foolish enough to leave the door of the chicken-house open one night. But on the whole they keep down rats, rabbits and wasps, which otherwise we would have to be doing ourselves. Yet some misguided souls are always trying to destroy badgers in one way or another.

Ever wondered why they have black and white stripes? I expect you think that they blend in with the broken rays of moonlight. Well, you're wrong! In fact their stripes are very conspicuous,

and badgers won't stir out on a bright night. Unluckily for Squire Brock his stripes act as a warning to other animals. This is all part of the scheme of nature which, although we can watch other people shoot rockets to the moon, we do not yet fully understand.

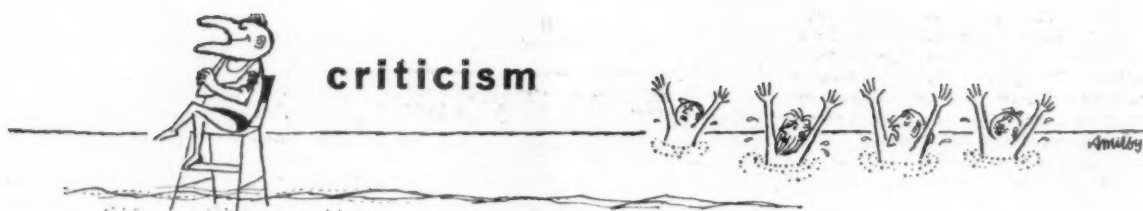
I hope, however, you haven't been taken in by the tale that the legs of a badger are shorter on one side than the other. The argument is that in this way they can easily walk along the sides of hills, but nobody can ever explain to me what happens when they want to turn round and go home!

Another belief about badgers, and one that I do not condemn, is that their grease is particularly good for rheumatism, if well rubbed in, and that it can in fact cure practically any ailment—though, come to think of it, my doctor has never sent me off to the chemist with a prescription for a jar of it.

If you particularly want to see a badger the odds are that you will have to wait outside a sett at night, for very seldom are they about during the day; and remember that although their sight is not too good they have a strong sense of smell, so you should keep downwind of the sett.

Should you ever get the chance, you will find that badger cubs make the most attractive pets, and you can train them to alter their shifts so that they sleep at night and are wide awake and alert all day, like you or me.

— JOHN GASELEE



AT THE PICTURES

The Mountain Road
Suddenly, *Last Summer*

PEOPLE who think of a war film as an our-side-good-their-side-bad story of action may be disconcerted by the comparative thoughtfulness and even subtlety of *The Mountain Road* (Director: Daniel Mann). Perhaps these will seem odd words to use about something with so many explosions in it, but the fact remains that the point of this one is concerned with nothing so material as literal defeat or victory or the physical destruction of anything: it is a matter of change in the central character's attitude of mind, and what brings it about.

He is a major (James Stewart) in command of a small demolition team—"eight guys and four trucks"—in the East China Task Force in 1944. We get a hint of the theme very early, when he tells a superior officer that he asked for this assignment so as "to have a command," and gets a serious reply to the effect that "command is power"—with the implication that he must take care not to be corrupted by it. From the start also (as with two scientifically-placed rifle-shots he sends up a petrol

dump) we are made aware that he is not without the common, human tendency to delight in destruction.

The trucks creep up "the mountain road" through a swarm of refugees. A bridge is blown, which is too bad for the refugees on the far side of it, and later the road is blown up at a hairpin bend, which is still worse for them. The characters of the men begin to emerge. A simple good-hearted one is killed by a starving mob fighting for the tins of food he tried to give them. A Chinese woman with the team—yes, this may sound like cheap box-office, but in fact I have never known the woman-among-men situation more sensibly and credibly managed—argues with the major, trying to get him to see that the refugees are not just another obstacle to be demolished or ignored; but at last, when he has lost two more men, he yields to the temptation to use his power for blind revenge . . .

Any summary must seem inadequate and confused, because as I say the point of the story is not in material events at all. But the action, the incident, the detail of the technique of demolition, the life of the men on the road and their characters, all this is interesting, entertaining and gripping

in itself. I'm surprised to see that some writers have dismissed the film in a word or two; I thought it well worth while.

I was disappointed by *Suddenly, Last Summer* (Director: Joseph L. Mankiewicz). I don't know Tennessee Williams's original play, but the film is utterly theatrical in feeling. A great number of people are apparently not in the least bothered by staginess in a film, but for me it spoils enjoyment. It isn't only a question of the limitation of scene and the effort to disguise it by movement; other things redolent of the stage here include the content and style of many of the dialogue lines (that mysterious flavour suggesting awareness of the presence of an audience), the manner of their delivery, and the whole feeling of the "strong" story itself.

There seems to be a general conspiracy to declare with horror and disgust that the piece is "about" homosexuality, incest, and cannibalism; but in fact it is about a number of characters some of whom behave as they do because of the memory or knowledge that these things went on no later than "last summer," before the story began. The past influences might have been horrors of any other kind; this story is about these people as they are, and its pattern is a plain dramatic conflict. The young surgeon's hospital desperately needs money; the rich Mrs. Venable will endow it if he operates to stop what she says are the hallucinations of her niece about the death of Mrs. Venable's too-beloved son; gradually, in spite of a passionate wish to help the hospital, he comes to believe the girl and to feel that rehabilitating her, without operation, is more important. That's the real story, and the grip of it has nothing to do with any disgusting vices whatever.

But it is altogether too theatrical. It's no criticism of Katharine Hepburn as the devouring mother to say that she acts as if on a stage, because given this over-life-size part, imagined and (I suppose) largely as written for the stage, no one could do anything else with it. Montgomery Clift as the young surgeon has to spend half his time repeating, with a questioning inflexion, the last words of the previous speaker. Elizabeth Taylor as the unhappy girl comes best out of the whole affair.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)
Also press-shown: *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond*, a competently-made gangster piece. *The Four Hundred Blows* (16/3/60) nears the end of its run—verb.



[*Suddenly, Last Summer*

Mrs. Venable—KATHARINE HEPBURN

Catherine Holly—ELIZABETH TAYLOR

sap. Two earlier gems have returned and are in the same programme: *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (20/1/60) and *The Picasso Mystery* (29/1/58). Straightforwardly good entertainment: *The League of Gentlemen* (20/4/60), *The Last Voyage* (18/5/60), and *Can-Can* (30/3/60).

One good release: *Cone of Silence* (4/5/60—92 mins.), well-done suspense story about an air pilot.

— RICHARD MALLETT

AT THE PLAY

Twelfth Night (STRATFORD)

It is always interesting to see a successful production revived with a different cast, and from Peter Hall's 1958 Stratford *Twelfth Night* only Dorothy Tutin, Patrick Wymark and Ian Holm remain. This makes the third in Mr. Hall's sequence of Shakespearian comedies. Its performance is considerably stronger than it was two years ago.

In particular Miss Tutin's Viola has grown up immeasurably. I admire very much the way she has overcome her inability to speak verse. To the most taking sincerity which is natural to her she now adds maturity and confidence; her Viola, fresh and spirited and full of humour,

REP. SELECTION

Playhouse, Liverpool, *The Elder Statesman*, until June 11.

Playhouse, Salisbury, *Uncle Vanya*, until May 28.

Oldham Rep., *The Hasty Heart*, until May 28.

Colchester Rep., *Rollo*, until May 28.

is altogether delightful. From Eric Porter Malvolio gets a new complexion. Instead of the fantastic butt who must always have been a poor steward, he plays him as a grave and responsible administrator with no shred of levity in his composition but with all the signs of ruthless efficiency; one can imagine him going through the house-keeper's accounts with a fine comb. Mr. Porter makes this reading very funny, and his threat of general revenge at the end has a chilling ring, for this Malvolio clearly means business.

Patrick Wymark's Sir Toby is younger than the average, and all the better for that; his enjoyment in baiting Malvolio is the more robust, and he carries off Maria with greater conviction. The Aguecheek is another triumph for Ian Richardson, a recruit to Stratford who is making his name rapidly. He avoids the extremes of eccentricity, and, not working too hard for laughs, gets them all the time. Derek Godfrey makes an admirably romantic figure of the lovesick Duke, and Max Adrian a haunting Feste who seems, in his engulfing sadness, beyond comfort. As Maria, Frances Cuka is improved.

The weakness of this production is the



Olivia. In 1958 Mr. Hall, greatly daring, allowed Geraldine McEwan to chirp her way through the part, and being Miss McEwan, and an original, she brought something to it that had never been there before. Trying the same line again with Barbara Barnett, he fails. This Olivia is simply a minx without dignity, and not at all the sort of girl to command a household and engage in steadfast mourning.

For me a very minor weakness is the gauze hung about midstage for most of the scenes. This has a door cut in it, through which the actors stream on their way downstage, and the pattern of their movement through this bottleneck becomes monotonous. But on balance the production is another winner for Stratford, and Lila de Mobili's sets and seventeenth century dresses stand up well to a further inspection.

Recommended

Ross (Haymarket—18/5/60) Alec Guinness in Rattigan's study of T. E. Lawrence. *Rhinoceros* (Royal Court — 4/5/60) Laurence Olivier in Ionesco's satire. *A Passage to India* (Comedy—27/4/60) E. M. Forster's novel brilliantly adapted.

—ERIC KEOWN

AT THE OPERA

Il Barbiere di Siviglia (ROYAL OPERA HOUSE)

Orpheus in the Underworld (SADLER'S WELLS)

I VO VINCO, one of five singers from Latin countries who are appearing at Covent Garden for the first time, came close enough in spirit for my own satisfaction to certain great Italian grotesques who, in the 'thirties, made so Daumier-like a figure of Don Basilio. Shaggy and beady-

eyed, he looked a bit like the Count of Monte Cristo. A newish note, this. His was the best male singing of the night. In the Calumny aria, Carlo Maria Giulini, the conductor, abetted him with extraordinary textures from the orchestra pit. Inner string parts, played "on the bridge," produced creepy, sub-human effects which I never heard before and are to be saluted as a stroke of genius.

The Figaro, Rolando Panerai, has a ready-made but skilled comic personality which won an ovation (as well as one loud, idiot boo) for *Largo al factotum*, notwithstanding that he forced his voice (first-night nerves?) and went off the note. There has been a deprecatory cough about his and Fernando Corena's (i.e., the Bartolo's) slapstick with razor, lather and wig in Act II; but the first-night audience laughed until the tears came—and they were right. Mr. Sarrazin's production and Mr. Malclès' production left me feeling on the whole benign.

The Offenbach piece at Sadler's Wells went so well that by the first interval people were telling each other, a little indignantly, that they shouldn't be there at all and that if ever a musical deserved an immediate transfer to the West End this was the job.

The show's basic strength is Geoffrey Dunn's book, which is adroit, up to date and very funny. Naturally Jupiter's court travels to Hell by tube train, and Eurydice (appetizingly acted and sung by June Bronhill) takes a bubble bath in her boudoir, as well as telephone calls. In these matters and much other nonsense Wendy Toye's production and Malcolm Pride's designs gear in with Mr. Dunn's script unflinchingly.

Not all the singing is as good as Miss Bronhill's. But it is so much better than



"I believe he's getting serious—he wants to take me to meet his Probation Officer."

bygone operetta standards in the West End that the journey to E.C.1 is not so posterous after all. Perhaps because of the deep-sunk orchestra pit, Alexander Faris (conductor) didn't bring up as much Offenbachian champagne as I had hoped for. But in tempi and general musical approach he clearly has the right idea.

—CHARLES REID

ON THE AIR

How Green Was My Corn

ELAINÉ MORGAN, a BBC discovery who is proving herself an indefatigable television dramatist with a sure "family" touch, has found a meaty story in *A Matter of Degree* (BBC). A Welsh miner's daughter who wins a scholarship to Oxford makes a splendid central character for a popular six-part serial, and Miss Morgan is evidently going to exploit the situation with gusto. So far I have been most impressed by Jessie Evans's effortless portrayal of Lil Thomas, a recognizable, slangy semi-slattern with the appropriate heart of gold; and by the work of Meredith Edwards as the miner: a fine performance, this, in the face of some perilously cliché-haunted dialogue. The title, by the way, hangs by a very slender pun and is surely too trivial.

There was a soothingly old-fashioned air about the first episode of "Yorky" (BBC), the new Wilfred Pickles series, and for that reason alone I have no doubt that a good many viewers will have found it to their taste. These are to be "plays of village life," by Bill Naughton and Allan Prior, presenting Mr. Pickles as a village schoolmaster and showing the "life and problems" of a modern country village. The first problem concerned a backward young man (convincingly played by Lawrence James) whose love affair was foundering on account of his inability to read or write. Mr. Pickles, playing Yorky with a marked lack of subtlety and an occasional half-line of dialogue apparently delivered straight at the camera, put his finger on the cause of the trouble in no time (the young man was one of those unfortunates who read from right to left) and effected a cure without any difficulty. It was not made clear to me how the young man had managed to get well past the age of puberty without anybody spotting his defect, but for all I know this point may have been cleared up in the last three minutes. By that time, I regret to say, I had lost interest and was daydreaming about the nice wholesome tales I used to read with fascination in my youth, inserted in parish magazines. "Yorky," judged by this first story, belongs with them. Its

heart is in the right place, and it is obviously going to leave us each week with an uplifting message. I do not violently object to that: all I ask is that the dialogue and general approach should be a little less basic. It is high time Mr. Pickles' talents found a satisfactory television niche, and I believe he may be nearer complete success when he is persuaded to play a character with a few more human failings than the cosy types he has dallied with so far.

"ABC Of The North" (ABC) is a magazine programme seen only in the north. It is edited and produced by Anthony Howard and directed (at breakneck speed) by Ronnie Taylor. A recent issue contained a debate about the unwillingness of young people to enter the Yorkshire heavy woollen industry (inconclusive, as are all such attempts to answer a complicated question in a few minutes); an interview with a young lady poodle-clipper (questions and interviewer's reactions far too pat, trotted out mechanically and obviously still fresh from the final run-through); a chat with a Liverpool private detective whose most successful case was when he proved that the autobiography of a Tibetan lama was written by a Devonshire plumber (interesting, but hopelessly short); and a three-handed argy-bargy by interested persons about management-artist troubles in the Hallé Orchestra. This last item had to be wound up (to the manifest disgust of an ex-Hallé cellist who had barely been permitted to open his mouth) before the facts of the dispute had been clearly established, and proved once again the folly of trying to cram more tit-bits into a twenty-minute programme than it will conveniently hold. All the same, this enterprise deserves encouragement. It is introduced with aplomb and a rather twee script by a working rep actor called David Mahlowe, it is not interrupted by commercials, and with a little more planning it could easily become a kind of miniature weekly northern "Tonight."

Up to the time of writing I have only seen enough of "Tempo 60" (BBC) to reach two hasty conclusions—namely, that Frank Berry is my idea of a completely embarrassing compère (*Radio Times* credits him with "off-beat humour," and if this is not forthcoming soon nothing can save him from joining Bruce Forsyth in my Hall of Infamy); and that producer Stewart Morris is as good as any in this frantic field when it comes to photographing instrumentalists and singers. I hope to study the programme more closely, and report.

—HENRY TURTON

PUNCH EXHIBITIONS

"Punch in the Cinema." Odeon Cinema, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

"Punch in the Theatre." Barkers Store, Eastbourne, and Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne.

"Punch with Wings." Exhibition Hall, Queen's Building, London Airport Central.

BOOKING OFFICE

MOTHER'S BOY MAKES GOOD

By VIOLET POWELL

Haldane of Cloan. His Life and Times. Dudley Sommer. George Allen and Unwin, 42/-

WHEN the formidable Mrs. Haldane died soon after her 100th birthday her son Richard, Secretary for War and twice Lord Chancellor, had written to her a daily letter for the previous forty-seven years. Mr. Dudley Sommer, whose biography, in spite of a plethora of exclamation marks, endeavours to be fair to all parties, questions whether this correspondence may not have been too heavy a burden on a public man, but the view of himself that Haldane presented to his mother may also explain his failures when he attempted to negotiate agreements with Germany. He spoke German as a second language and he had a profound admiration for German philosophy. He not unnaturally felt, as he wrote to Mrs. Haldane, that he was more suited than other members of the Government to make the Emperor William II see sense, and at Windsor in 1907 he began promising conversations in which the Kaiser was conciliatory and complimentary. However, von Bülow objected to the suggested agreement, and Haldane returned to the task of re-organizing the Army.

In 1912 he was sent on a mission to Berlin in an attempt to reach agreement on naval matters. Again Haldane found the Kaiser amenable, but this time von Tirpitz sabotaged any hope of a settlement. When the war came Haldane was attacked by the Northcliffe press as pro-German, and also accused of opposing the dispatch of the B.E.F. to France. These attacks were both unfair and untrue, but in the hysteria of the moment he became *persona non grata*, so much so that he was dropped when the Coalition Government was formed. Asquith and Grey, his closest friends, discussed the question of insisting by their resignations that he should be included in the Government, but with a few crocodile tears they abandoned him.

Haldane behaved with dignity under further attacks, and finally reappeared as Lord Chancellor in

Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour Government. Mr. Sommer, from the many letters quoted, gives one from MacDonald to King George V on the subject of the "Campbell Case." Its mixture of bluster and irresponsibility makes it all the more surprising that Haldane was so much impressed by MacDonald's handling of Cabinet meetings. Haldane was in many ways a mysterious figure, and liked to make mysteries for their own sake. His explanation of Einstein's theory at a dinner table was so mysterious "that," said Asquith, "even the candles lost their lighting power in the complexities of Haldane's explanations." That was towards the end of his career, but his earliest success in the Court of Appeal is also worth mentioning. His arguments so roused the Master of the Rolls that the latter had a relapse into Bright's Disease from which he did not recover. Although judgment in the necessarily adjourned case was eventually given against Haldane, professionally he had undoubtedly made his mark.

PRESENTING THE CRITICS



STRAUSFELD

7.—DILYS POWELL
Films, The Sunday Times

NEW NOVELS

- Acrobat Admits.** Alfred Grossman. Heinemann, 16/-
Facial Justice. L. P. Hartley. Hamish Hamilton, 15/-
The Right to an Answer. Anthony Burgess. Heinemann, 16/-
The Leopard. Giuseppe di Lampedusa. Collins and Harvill Press, 16/-

Acrobat Admits is a success in a field strewn with failures. It is a first person narrative by a cad who gradually changes into a madman, told in a mixture of interior monologue, parody and straight comic writing. This gruesome entertainment manages to convey aspects of America that novelists have often snatched at but missed. Although its depths are disquieting, its surface is varied and amusing and it can be read simply as a farce about an amorist who woos two girls under different pseudonyms—though to ignore the tragedy of his gradually splitting personality would be to sacrifice a good deal to superficial pleasure. It is a brilliantly accomplished novel that reminded me a bit of *Augie March*, a bit of *The Ginger Man* and even a bit of the novels of Mr. Warren Miller, but it is completely original as a whole.

Mr. Hartley is an uneven and unexpected writer. *Facial Justice* is quite unlike anything he has written before and, though a summary might not suggest it, it comes off. It is a fantasy about the future, where so much contemporary fiction takes place. A benevolent dictatorship has trained the population to accept an equality that goes as far as downgrading the beautiful and upgrading the plain by plastic surgery. The heroine is a rebel and Mr. Hartley cunningly analyses the relationship of rebel and dictator. Written with coolness and certainty, unpredictable and stimulating, the fable has some of the elegance of *Eustace and Hilda*, though it lacks its richness.

The Right to an Answer is probably the point in Mr. Burgess's literary career at which reviewers will be asking "Whither now?" His Malayan trilogy established his strong individuality. A Burgess novel meant the seediness of an empire in decline, reminiscences of poetry written and read in Redbrick universities, critical pictures of the Succession States, very funny drunks and a good, swinging narrative. In his new novel the scene is a Midland suburb and the narrator is on leave from a commercial job in the Far East, where he has dreamed about home, which he now finds as seedy as Asia. I do not quite understand why everybody refers to Mr. Burgess as a funny man. He is as accurate and depressing as Gissing, though I agree he is a Gissing with a sense of fun and an eye for any comedy to be found in his ruined world.

The Leopard arrives almost hidden from sight by awed news stories about the Prince who wrote it and Monsieur Aragon has hailed it as "one of the great novels of all time." This erudite grandee has produced something that is less an historical novel than a novel about

the past written from inside it. It is not a pastiche of a mid-nineteenth century novel but a genuine one inexplicably produced a century late. It is a Stendhalian portrait of a Sicilian Prince faced by the Risorgimento and coming to terms with it, a wonderful picture of a time, a place and a system of government. The fashionable taste for anti-democratic fiction may bring the book some doubtful admirers. It is a sardonic work, and we all enjoy the sardonic, especially in translation; but surely, at bottom, the sardonic is a mannered acceptance of other people's suffering, a dandified pessimism, and it is an acceptable stance only for the few novelists who can produce masterpieces in it. I am a little doubtful whether this is one, but at least I have read few novels this year so continuously interesting and enjoyable.

—R. G. G. PRICE

A CLUTCH OF POETS

Collected Poems. Lawrence Durrell. *Faber*, 21/-

Collected Poems. William Plomer. *Cape*, 18/-

The Skylark and Other Poems. Ralph Hodgson. *Macmillan*, 15/-

The Gravel Ponds. Peter Levi, S.J. *André Deutsch*, 10/6

The Year of the Phoenix. R. C. Scriven. *Secker and Warburg*, 7/6

The Guinness Book of Poetry. *Putnam*, 10/6

Collected Poems. Rupert Brooke. *Faber*, 5/-

One of the things modern poems need is an indication, for new readers, of the speed at which they ought to be taken. The reader who is ready to go through *Faber's* handy paperback of Brooke's poems at a smart trot would be able to take most of William Plomer at a walking pace, but would have to slow down for Lawrence Durrell to the speed of an old gardener weeding a neglected border.

I don't actually like Durrell's poetry. It is obviously a considerable *œuvre*, but reminds me of some vast Hindu frieze, replete with innumerable details of pose and gesture, each of which obviously had for the artist an intense and exact significance, probably sexual, but is meaningless to the modern tourist. I read this sort of poem with a sense of duty, assuring myself that it is good, but feeling that I ought to be congratulated when I really enjoy it. Others I know feel otherwise; they can breathe, without stifling, the incense compounded of Mediterranean spices that burns from Mr. Durrell's strong intelligence. They will find everything here they want.

William Plomer, on the other hand, seems often a little too easy to read and occasionally too easy to write. He has moved a long way from the almost vulgar directness of the early poems to the refined detachment of to-day's. This makes the unchronological arrangement of the poems tiresome; one finds oneself starting off on the wrong foot. But the changing moods are refreshing, and occasionally combine to good effect, as in the amused admiration of the line

Negroes he loved, and next to Negroes, paint.

Meanwhile Ralph Hodgson, rising like a ghost from the anthologies, has been going his own way. This is the first collection of his poems to be published since 1917. It is like the outpourings of a crotchety lark, thin, pure melody on curious subjects. Only

one poem in it—a series of similes about Time—seems to me really remarkable, but the whole book can be read with pleasure and amusement.

Peter Levi is one of the miserable Christians. (Even in poets one tends to think of as jolly, like Betjeman, religion seems to induce a cavernous melancholy.) Though few of his poems are explicitly religious they have an intense seriousness that seems almost devotional. Cheerfulness never breaks in, but occasionally, in the most successful poems, there is a clear, dreamlike vision that is almost an echo of joy.

R. C. Scriven is Honest English—the England of countryside and crafts. His careful use of the exact word, the rare but telling detail, does not ruffle the easy flow of his verses. Many of the poems here first appeared in *Punch*.

Finally there is the third Guinness collection, which consists of eighty-five of the poems submitted for the Guinness Award during the last poetical year (which runs from midsummer to midsummer). The rapid change of style makes for indigestible reading; but there are a lot of interesting poems and one gets a glimpse of the way the muses are going at the moment. By and large they seem to like casual, even frivolous, chatter most; but every now and then someone lets fall a great thumping line, as if to see if anyone notices. Everyone pretends not to.

—PETER DICKINSON

NOT CRICKET

Over to Me. Jim Laker. *Muller*, 16/-

"Cricket, lovely cricket," sang the innocents of the Caribbean. Well, there is nothing lovely about the game described by Laker: his game, these last ten years, seems to have been a nettlebed of spite, jealousy, and rancour, and his ill-considered comments on his team-mates and opponents are the nearest thing to muck-raking since I last looked at a gossip column through the eyes of Penelope Gilliatt. I can understand Laker's criticism of the people who have rapped his knuckles, the selectors, managers and captains, during "his last few turbulent years in English and international cricket" (blurb), but I am quite at a loss to fathom Laker's motives in savaging the reputations of scores of his former companions and county cricket associates. "He is not the sort of person I want to have any contact with"—this is the kind of comment to be found on almost every page. He betrays obvious confidences in the most brazen manner, blows up innocent attempts at dressing-room humour into ruinous calumny. A pity, all this, for Jim Laker has had a wonderful career and has much to teach. This is not a book to put into the hands of the young hopeful. For o'der disillusioned readers I may add that the contents cover the last disastrous M.C.C. tour of Australia, the last series in South Africa, a round-up of the counties and the usual makeweight commentary on the ideal world eleven.

—BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



HARGREAVES.

THE SLAVERS

The Defeat of John Hawkins, a biography of his first slaving voyage. Rayner Unwin. *Allen and Unwin, 25/-*

John Hawkins, famous and knighted at the defeat of the Armada, was in his youth a pioneer slaver; his coat of arms was a Negro bound by a cord. Kidnapped in the fever-ridden estuaries of the Gambia, the blacks were shipped to the West Indies, where everyone, from the Governors downwards, scrambled, openly or covertly, to buy. But the trade was never legitimized, and the Spanish Government, enforcing its monopoly, caught up with "Juan Aquines" at San Juan de Ulua. In command of the harbour, Hawkins could have kept the *flota* out; still technically at peace, he risked letting them in and they outsmarted him. The notorious treachery became a political turning point on the road to 1588.

Drake and Hawkins escaped, but the English captured ashore suffered fantastic adventures; some were caught and burned after suitable brainwashing by the Inquisition. Three of them even, apparently, walked from the Gulf of Mexico to Nova Scotia to be rescued by French fishermen, and vividly described the vast herds of bison in the interior. This excellent narrative is based on first-hand evidence; it makes fascinating reading and deserves a wide public. — JOHN BOWLE

IRISH COLOSSUS

Sean O'Casey. David Krause. *Macgibbon and Kee, 30/-*

An American scholar, Dr. Krause is much nearer to comprehension of the Irish mind than are most English critics, and if he forgets some of the benefits of British rule at least he is under no delusions about the climate of narrow puritanism against which O'Casey rebelled and from which he went into exile. The Abbey audiences behaved like the hooligans many of them were; it was much more shocking and significant when the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin refused to bless the Dublin Festival of 1958 because it was to include a play by the greatest dramatist then living.

Dr. Krause traces his subject's debt to Boucicault as well as to Synge, and puts up a lively defence of him as a writer of tragi-comedy. His book is full of the kind of shrewd, unpedantic criticism that helps understanding, and lovers of the plays will approve the terms in which he savours the grand flood of O'Casey's language. The notes and index are very thorough.

— ERIC KEOWN

ROUGH CHILDHOOD

The Crack of Dawn. By Peter de Polnay. *Hollis and Carter, 18/-*

In the latest chapter of his autobiography Mr. de Polnay looks back to his childhood, but not in the usual fantasizing way. True, he admits at once that "one invents one's childhood," but his own recollections have an uncommon asperity. Perhaps this is the influence of his father, a terrifying figure who dominates these pages from beyond



"I must admit, at first we didn't believe you when your returns said you didn't make any money last year."

the grave. Known always to his progeny as "Authority," he was negligent, unforgiving and violent. For many years after, whenever Mr. de Polnay caught the scent of the brand of eau-de-Cologne which his father had used, he would feel an impulse to bolt or hide. "If I were you I'd run away," said one of his tutors, "even if it meant working in a coal-mine." Mr. de Polnay does not take too gloomy a view of those days. It was a travelled childhood, spent in Devonshire, Switzerland and Italy; it was a prosperous and protected one; and the centrifugal world of the nursery (its games, fantasies, fears, mischiefs and calamities) is described with irony and love. — PETER DUVAL SMITH

CREDIT BALANCE

Night Without End. Alistair MacLean. *Collins, 15/-*. Exciting yarn about Arctic scientific party coping with crashed air liner, murderers, ice, winds and effects of low temperatures on machinery. Enthralling detail—climatic, physical and medical. Character-drawing a bit rough-and-ready, in a manly way; but tale-spinning expert. As impossible to put down as a live electrode.

This is Rome. M. Sasek. *W. H. Allen, 12/6*. First Paris, then London—now Rome. Another of M. Sasek's excellent pictorial excursions; his particular quality of stylization lifts these childrens' books to the highest level. No doubt they are becoming collectors' pieces.



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BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

FOR WOMEN



A Child's Guide to Office Life

LOOK at my lovely pheasant.

Who gave it to you?

George Norman.

Who's George Norman?

A man in my office. I told you about him.

What's he like?

Oh he's marvellous. I told you about him.

What does he do?

He's a copy-writer.

What does that mean?

It means he writes clever headlines and things.

Are they funny?

Yes, terribly.

Like what?

Like "One good tin deserves another." An advertisement for tin you see. And "I shudder to think of it."

To think of what?

Some sort of chocolate, I think.

What was the drawing?

Rodin's *Le Penseur*.

Gosh. That's very good, isn't it?

Yes, very good.

He must be clever. What's he like?

Marvellous. I just told you.

Is advertising a good job?

Yes, if you've got talent.

Has George Norman got talent?

Oh yes. I told you he's marvellous.

What does he do all day?

Well, he comes into my office for tea and coffee, and tells me what's in the papers sometimes, and to talk.

What do you talk about?

(Caution) Well . . . We usually start with my legs.

What about them?

Well, he asks me where I got 'em.

What for?

That's called Market Research.

Then what?

Then comes Public Relations.

What does that mean?

That means he decides who to ring up.

Do you help him?

Like anything.

What does he say to them when he's decided?

Well, he usually starts with their legs too. But he speaks very quiet and I can't always hear.

Why does he speak so quietly?

So that I can't always hear.

Why shouldn't you?

Well, if I could only partly hear what he said, then I might get it wrong and think he was making improper suggestions.

Does he sometimes?

I rather think he does.

Why don't you know?

'Cos I don't believe what he says. (Triumphant escape from a difficult situation.)

He sounds fascinating.

He is.

What else does he do?

Well, he plays jungle rhythm and the piano, and he's got a telly in his bedroom and he knows some King's Road models.

How do you know?

'Cos he works in my office. (Caution again.)

And what else?

He's a very good shot.

Did he shoot that pheasant?

Yes he did. Specially for me.

Are you very pleased?

Yes, very.

— JANE NAPIER

The Truth about that Third Baby

NOW, for a change, you are in the fashion. Your biggest daughter is seven; your next is five. How can you possibly have forgotten what to do?

The first point to remember is the obvious one—Jealousy. When you brought Number Two home you had to be careful about Number One. That was relatively easy; your husband was a new Father; he helped with the toddler when you were busy with the baby. You did all the right things according to that great American Father Figure—old Spock. Now your kind, everloving husband is bored. If you must have a third child, okay, but don't expect him to help. He's forgotten

how to pin a nappy, and he doesn't want to remember. This is where Jealousy rears its ugly head. All efforts on a concentrated attack to kill that serpent.

You have got so used to shouting at your darling little girls you must learn to modify your voice when dealing with your Great Big Loved One. He is approaching his misunderstood stage, ripe for the first pretty secretary who walks into his office. Fortunately, thanks to modern architecture, he is surrounded on three sides by glass. Humour him. Give him new toys to play with. Buy him an exercise machine and for goodness' sake—now more than

ever—stop messing up his copy of *The Times*.

You have become old-fashioned. You are not a clever young mother working to a routine. You want your third to stay a baby for as long as possible. It is going to be your last. (For once Husband will agree with you.) You have forgotten the rules. You keep picking him up and hugging him. Oh foolish woman . . . put that baby down!

You've never had a boy before. Is it true that masculine laziness starts at these tender years? Surely you have that maternal instinct which will guide you through all your problems? Your starving baby, after yelling its head off for hours, will suck happily for a little while then fall asleep. Perhaps an hour or two later he would like a second helping. He must have heard about this Demand Feeding. He is trying it out. You may find yourself shaking that obstinate bundle. Do not feel ashamed of yourself and rush to the telephone to make an appointment with a psychiatrist. Just count ten and bring up baby's wind.

If you try hurrying, baby will certainly thwart you. Even if you have the inclination but not the time you must cuddle him and mother him on your lap before putting him down. For the first few months you can combine this with reading. Heavy books are difficult, but you can arrange a few magazines and papers, opened at the appropriate pages before starting the feed. Literature and lactation can be coupled quite happily until about the third month when your clever darling realizes that you are not concentrating. He may not be able to control his movements, but he will find how to push the paper off your lap. You can always buy a music stand. There are ways.

Later, when baby reaches play-pen stage, the children are certain to hand the most unsuitable things through the bars. They are trying to amuse baby. They do not really want him to strangle himself with the string, or swallow the mosaic pieces.

By now you should be so wise you can anticipate your problems and forestall them. You know very well that baby, the sturdy little fellow, can go for long walks round the room, pushing and pulling his play-pen with him. Tie

it up. You know he can travel far on his potty. Tie it up. You know he is going to store that spinach in his mouth until he is ready to spit. Duck—and wear a cover-all. It is Mother who needs the great big plastic overall. Not baby.

Take life easily. Expect your child to be high-spirited (naughty is a nasty word). Do not let him drive you up the wall; a sedative is the answer. For Mother, of course, not baby. And remember, if you cannot find a space in the nursery where you can do your mending without the children running off with the contents of your sewing box there is always the possibility of Mother getting into the play-pen for a few inches of freedom.

— CHARLOTTE LESSING

☆

"FAIR CRACK OF WHIP
FOR EVERY CHILD
A Haywards Heath
Head Looks to Future."
Mid-Sussex Times

Well, a lot are in favour.

Fitting Room

AN hour ago my looking-glass reflected,
Dispassionate, the old familiar me.
I saw there more or less what I expected—
The person that I think myself to be:
The "shorter woman": "not so slim,"
alas:
Yet not repulsive. Laughter in the eyes,
Not unintelligent . . . I left my glass
But carried with me all its cheering lies.

Yet here I see an aged moron leering
From cruel mirrors triply multiplied;
A sagging dwarf from every angle
peering,
Raddled and stout, at me from every
side . . .
Recoiling, with a muttered explanation
Of sudden illness, anxiously I speed
Back to my glass, and in rapt
contemplation
Try to believe that THIS is me indeed.

— MARGOT CROSSE



"All she ever thinks about is boys, clothes and gramophone records."

Toby Competitions

No. 115—Coming All Too Shortly
COMPETITORS are invited to script an unattractive film trailer. Limit 120 words.

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up receive a one-guinea book token. **Entries by first post on Wednesday, June 1.** Address to TOBY COMPETITION No. 115, *Punch*, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Report on Competition No. 112 (Bottle-scarred and Battle-scarred)

Competitors were asked to provide a newspaper retraction or apology that was more damaging than the original item retracted. Bigamy and illegitimacy proved to be far the most popular fields, and though most entrants chose to have a second bash with the bludgeon rather than just to twist the

knife, there was a lively entry. The winner is:

R. C. M. LONGLEY
DEPT. CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
IMPERIAL COLLEGE
LONDON, S.W.7

We regret that in yesterday's edition we erroneously stated that the newly christened baby was the daughter of Mr. X and his fifth wife, formerly the Hon. Miss A. We now understand that Mr. X has at no time been married to Miss A, and apologize for any embarrassment the error may have caused on this happy occasion.

The following earn book tokens:

Dear Sir,—My recent condemnation of the loss by the Board of over £5½ millions in six months is being regarded as an attack on the integrity of Mr. Limpet. Sir, this is ridiculous. Mr. Limpet is just as incapable of dishonesty as he is of foresight, competent management or leadership. Nobody doubts that Mr. Limpet did his best. He always does and the loss therefore

is incidental. There was a time when control and cupidity went together. We have an honest man. Let us be proud and pay.

J. Aguecheek, 20 Dault Road, Wandsworth Common, London, S.W.18.

In our recent review of John Postmaster's latest book, *From Amœba to Aztec*, we mentioned that we found it extremely difficult to understand how an expert could make statements as grossly inaccurate as many contained in this expensive publication. We tender our sincere apologies to the author and his publishers for our remarks, since it has now been brought to our notice that Mr. Postmaster is not an expert on the subject of this book, although he does have an expert knowledge of a number of the other topics on which he speaks and writes with such impressive authority.

Dan Hazlewood, 15 Gladsmuir Close, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

We must apologize for the most unfortunate misprints in our report of Mrs. Tympani's musical soirée last week. The passage in question ran: "At Mrs. Tympani's charming Kensington residence last night a party of musical fiends, among whom were some of London's best-known fiddlers, heard Giuseppe Vibrato, the world famous Italian violinist, slay Beethoven's Violin Concerto." This should, of course, have read: "At Mrs. Tympani's charming Kensington residence last night a party of musical friends, among whom were some of London's best-known diddlers, heard Giuseppe Vibrato, the world-famous Italian violinist, slay Beethoven's Violin Concerto."

G. J. Blundell, Littlewood, East Malling, Kent.

Our Dramatic Critic writes: I should feel sorry if there were any real cause for "Faithful Admirer's" complaint that in referring to "the two generations" I was intentionally ungallant to that vastly experienced actress, Miss Ranting, when comparing her performance in *A Spring Evening* to that of the youthful and sparkling Miss Blossom. On re-reading my comments, however, I do realize that appearances might well have been left to speak for themselves.

J. H. Polfrey, Fircroft, Broadwater Rise, Guildford, Surrey.

In our last issue we reported the ordination of the former well-known cricketer, the Reverend Walter Bragg. By an unfortunate error he was referred to as "the only son of his parents." We deeply regret the pain this must have caused them, and also apologize to the Reverend's brother.

The Rev. Anthony Foy, St. Joseph's, Hawkstone Park, Weston, Shrewsbury.



"I keep thinking that he's been fighting."

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